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Canonical Variations on an Apocryphal Theme

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Reproduction of Johann Sebastian Bach's fourteen canons on a Goldberg bass (Cote Manuscript 17669 in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris) is by permission of the Chef de Conservation du Département de Musique of the Bibliothèque Nationale and Editions Salabert, which published them in 1976 in *14 Canons sur la basse Goldberg*.

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Introduction

The title of this book states its thesis, that through the works of these authors there runs a common theme in the musical sense, an original air that appears in ever changing guise among the fourteen books considered here, variations on a story that has the kind of multipurpose inner harmony that in music is an essential prerequisite to a canonical theme. It is only because they are read here together, of course, that from these texts something like a canon emerges; reading them in light of each other, putting them together in a particular way, is a critical activity that finds, however, a distinct counterpart in canonic composition. A canon true to its name is a puzzle, as are, for example, the fourteen enigmatic circle canons recently discovered on the inside back cover of a copy of the Goldberg Variations annotated by the composer; written in Bach's own hand, they are based on the first eight notes of the ground of the aria on which the preceding thirty variations were composed. They are not, however, written out in their entirety. Instead, clues are provided to indicate the kind of canonic treatment required in each case—the number of voices, the point at which these voices should enter. Yet a great deal is still left to the ingenuity of the reader, in particular the manner in which the later voices imitate the first: though they are all rigorous copies of the subject, they may well be inverted, reversed, and/or begin at a different pitch (indeed, at least two of these new additions to the Bach canon can be solved in more

than one way).[1] The name of this form of imitative composition derives from *κανών, rule*; it calls for the discovery and application of a hidden rule, and in each case a different one, a rule somehow suggested by the nature of the theme and by whatever clues are given. *The Oxford English Dictionary* gives this illustrative quotation:

> 1609, Douland, *Ornith. Microl.*, 48: A Canon . . . is an imaginarie rule, drawing that part of the Song which is not set downe out of that part which is set downe. Or it is a Rule, which doth wittily discover the secret of a Song.

Like Nicholas of Cusa's conception of human history, this process of drawing out what is already there is the *explicatio* of a *complicato.* Douglas Hofstadter, in his recent *Gödel, Escher, Bach,* raises an interesting question about this drawing-out procedure: "How hard are you allowed to pull?" For there are instances—the solving of enigmatic canons, the transformation through DNA from molecule to organism—when "the pulling-out may involve such complicated operations that it makes you feel you are putting in more information than you are pulling out" (*GEB*, 159).[2] Drawing, however, upon the example of the genetic meaning contained in DNA, "one of the best possible examples of implicit meaning," he argues that even here, where "[i]n order to convert genotype [molecule] into phenotype [organism], a set of mechanisms far more complex than the genotype must operate on the genotype" (*GEB*, 160), the arduousness and complexity of the pulling-out process are not in themselves evidence that any meaning was added through the interaction of message with interpreter, or of DNA with its necessary chemical context, that was not already there. The test is whether the original message has "enough compelling inner logic that its context [the chemical context necessary for DNA to become, through the transcribing RNA, protein; or the cultural context necessary for a composition of J. S. Bach (in the form of a record sent swirling through space, according to Hofstadter's example, without benefit of a record player, to be picked up by some alien but highly intelligent civilization) to be deciphered and enjoyed] will be restored automatically whenever intelligence of a high enough level comes in contact with it. If some message did have that context-restoring property, then it would seem reasonable to consider the meaning of the message as an inherent property of the message" (*GEB*, 164). Even a molecule of DNA, Hofstadter maintains, "sent out to seek its fortune in the universe" would contain enough inner logic to enable a highly advanced civilization "to deduce from its chemical structure what kind of chemical environment it seemed to want and then supply such an environment" (*GEB*, 175).

Providing a context is the aim of this book, although it is not easy to say which is the context and which the original message: Fowles, Irving, and Barthes (and Goethe and Balzac) both illuminate and are illuminated by Tobit, as well as by each other. And it is not clear that what they wrote was influenced by that text from the Old Testament Apocrypha in the traditional sense. But read in the perspective of Tobit, Fowles's most recent works of fiction, Irving's novels, and Roland Barthes's *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* begin to show a unity they had not revealed before, both in themselves and among each other. It is their repetition of the story in Tobit that brings them together; that such a reunion of texts of independent origins is possible is surely due to what could be called the compelling inner logic of that original text. Like the first eight notes of the bass of the Goldberg Variations' aria, that ancient account of how Tobias became Sarah's eighth and final husband is so constructed that its story doesn't end when its plot does, but continues, its hero reappearing in the person of at least eight later protagonists: Charles Smithson, Daniel Martin, T. S. Garp, Fred Trumper, Werther, Daniel d'Arthez, Roland Barthes, and a certain Phaedrus.

What follows, then, is simply the result of the discovery of something akin to Dowland's imaginary rule, a reunion of texts and heroes that makes it possible to see that, separately, they had already been drawing out the secret of that noncanonical theme.

1. Christoph Wolff, "Bach's *Handexemplar* of the Goldberg Variations: A New Source."

2. Douglas R. Hofstadter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid.*

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1

Fowles's Enigma Variations

"Just thinking of what Barthes said"—ET, 259

When Sarah Woodruff returned to her Exeter hotel with the purchases Charles's gift of ten sovereigns had allowed her to make, she lost no time unwrapping them. These were the first things she had ever owned, and they deserved her contemplative gaze. The one the narrator describes in greatest detail, over which he lingers longest, is

> a Toby jug, not . . . of Victorian manufacture, but a delicate little thing in pale mauve and primrose-yellow, the jolly man's features charmingly lacquered by a soft blue glaze (ceramic experts may recognize a Ralph Wood). . . . The Toby was cracked, and was to be recracked in the course of time, as I can testify, having bought it myself a year or two ago. . . . But unlike her, I fell for the Ralph Wood part of it. She fell for the smile. (*FLW*, 220)

The relic of an earlier time, this Toby ("a jug or mug . . . in the form of a stout old man wearing a long and full-skirted coat and a three-cornered hat"),[2] like John Fowles's novel, carries with it something more than entertainment value. Like the smile that caught Sarah's eye, the expressive features of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* have made it a best seller, as was the jug. In the case of the latter, we are told, a discerning eye can see more than the charm of the surface, into a remoter past and a meaningful origin.

> She did not have the least idea of the age of her little Toby. But she had a dim feeling that it had been much used, had passed through many

> hands . . . and was now hers. *Was now hers*—she set it on the mantelpiece and, still in her coat, stared at it with a childlike absorption, as if not to lose any atom of this first faint taste of ownership. (*FLW*, 220)

This peculiar emphasis, for the ellipsis and italics are Fowles's, on the importance of this vessel is all the more striking for the fact that, though it gives Sarah her first taste of ownership, it was not the first of her purchases to be opened—evidently the Staffordshire teapot, "with a pretty colored transfer of a cottage by a stream and a pair of lovers," did not elicit such a proprietary sense.

The Toby jug will make one more appearance, just before Charles's prospective marriage with Ernestina and a dull and respectable future are irretrievably lost by a fatal ninety seconds. It catches his eye in that Exeter room to which Sarah had fled from her self-engineered disgrace at Lyme Regis, and to which she was able to summon Charles, despite his decision never to see her again, by the three mere words "Endicott Family Hotel."

> He glanced round the small room. A newly made-up fire burned in the grate. There were some tired stems of narcissus in a Toby jug on the mantelpiece. (*FLW*, 271)

The Toby jug indeed bears a multiplicity of signs, varying with the eye of the beholder: an authentic artistic origin for the narrator, an entrancing smile and a first taste of ownership for Sarah, and now Narcissus for Charles, if literary and mythological allusions function in Fowles, the image of someone seeing himself.

Could the Toby jug be an image of Charles—his stand-in, his *lieutenant*? It might if Charles meant to Sarah what the Toby did, something that gave her the power and the pride of possession. Her possessive obsession is, in fact, a secret truth that Charles will not learn until the end, when he finds her again after years of search, living as Sarah Roughwood in a Pre-Raphaelite household:

> And perhaps he did at last begin to grasp her mystery. Some terrible perversion of human sexual destiny had begun; he was no more than a footsoldier, a pawn in a far vaster battle; and like all battles, it was not about love, but about possession and territory. (*FLW*, 355)

He will realize what makes her utterly different from himself, the fact that he had "an ability to give" but she "could give only to possess" (*FLW*, 364). Yet how could Charles Smithson in any way resemble the comic old toper on the jug? He doesn't, of course, but an interesting perspective on Fowles's novel can emerge if one is willing to read the scene of Sarah's fascination with the Toby in the same way the narrator reads the jug, seeing in this object that has somehow fallen into his

hands something of greater age and value than Sarah can imagine. The narrator, who should by no means be confused with John Fowles, traced its origin back to Ralph Wood (1715–72, the potter who, together with his son of the same name, made the first Toby jug, soon to become extremely popular and frequently imitated).[3] It is possible, however, to pursue further back in time, to a pre-Ralph Wood origin, not the jug itself but the scene that unites a Toby with a Sarah.

Toby is the familiar form of Tobias, the hero of the Book of Tobit, one of the most widely read texts of the Old Testament Apocrypha.[4] His story is worth telling in some detail. Tobit, a Jew in exile in Nineveh, was a man of good works, in particular that of burying corpses that would otherwise remain above ground, often victims of execution by the Assyrian state. One evening he had left his house to dig a grave for such a corpse and, having become ceremonially defiled, had to sleep outside by a courtyard wall. Sparrows sitting on the wall dropped dung into his open eyes and made him blind. In despair, he prayed for divine assistance. Meanwhile, a woman in Ecbatana was praying to God over troubles of her own. She had been given in marriage seven times, and each husband had been killed by an evil demon before the marriage could be consummated. Tobit, now both old and blind, remembered a sum of money owed him in a distant city and, unable to go himself, decided to send his son Tobias. In view of his son's youth and inexperience, a traveling companion is hired, who is in fact the angel Raphael in human disguise. On the first evening of the journey, Tobias goes down to the river Tigris to bathe and is startled by a fish that leaps out of the water, threatening to devour him. Raphael tells him to catch the fish, and then to cut it open and remove the heart, liver, and gall, and to keep them safe. After they eat the fish and continue along their way, Raphael begins to talk to Tobias about the woman in Ecbatana, a city along their route, informing him that she is a distant relative of his, that he therefore has a right to demand her hand in marriage, and that with the heart and liver of the fish he will be able to make a smoke that will frighten away the demon. And this takes place. The money, which will constitute Tobias's inheritance, is retrieved as well; and the wife, the angel, and the son return to Nineveh, where Tobias cures his father's blindness with the gall.

That blindness occurred in the most curious of ways: the father appears to have been sleeping as fish do, with his eyes open ("As my eyes were open, the sparrows' droppings fell into my eyes and produced white films on them." [Tobit 2:10])—and, lying there on the ground in such a state, he would also have looked like the kind of thing that

he seems to have had an obsession to conceal, an unburied corpse. The measure of that obsession, present in both father and son, can be taken from the first words Tobit speaks to Tobias in his advice before the journey, "My boy, when I die, bury me" (Tobit 4:3), and from Tobias's concern, should the demon kill him as he killed the others, that his parents would "have no other son to bury them" (Tobit 6:14) (as well as from the happy ending of the book, where, between the blessings of honored old age and inherited wealth, it is said of Tobias that "he gave his father-in-law and mother-in-law splendid funerals" [Tobit 14:13]). The fish, then, as it rose out of the water in a menacing way, might have been all the more upsetting to Tobias for its being a body that suddenly becomes unburied. It would have taken an angel's authority to convince him to grab it, preventing it from returning beneath the surface, and to cut it open to remove its hidden contents. And if not for Tobias, then at least for an attentive reader of the story, that fish is suggestive of not only a corpse but the father as well, whose eyes were open as he slept, like a corpse and like a fish.

What connection this story might have with *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, and in particular with the Toby jug that received Sarah's absorbing gaze, is suggested by the fact that the name of the woman Tobias wed was Sarah.[5] Emboldened by this coincidence of names, together with the way in which the Toby jug can be seen as a figure for Charles, one could pursue the resemblance along several lines:

> Charles's paternal grandfather, whose name he bears and to whom he was "nearer in temperament" than his father (*FLW*, 19), had an immense fascination, which Charles recently began to share, with archaeology, having "devoted a deal of his money and much more of his family's patience" to the excavation of neolithic graves (*FLW*, 16). This interest in disinterment, though the inverse of Tobit's obsession, does bespeak an intense concern with what is buried, and shapes the younger Charles's outlook enough for him to merit Dr. Grogan's rebuke, "When we know more of the living, that will be the time to pursue the dead" (*FLW*, 125).
>
> It is when Charles had gone to the water's edge to hunt for a kind of buried water creature, the fossil of "the elusive echinoderm" (*FLW*, 264), that he was startled by the discovery of a corpse who came to life as Sarah Woodruff: "And there, below him, he saw a figure. For one terrible moment he thought he had stumbled on a corpse. But it was a woman asleep" (*FLW*, 61). A reader of Tobit alert to the importance of interment for both father and son and to the manner of Tobit's blindness would see more than a fish in what broke the

surface before Tobias's eyes. Charles, for a brief moment of terror, thought he saw a corpse. So, perhaps, did Tobias; and for both what ultimately came out of their fishing expedition was a woman.

Charles will once again go down to the water's edge, now no longer the Atlantic but an inland river, and there he will find tombs and a turning point in his life, just after the encounter with Sarah in the Exeter hotel in which he learns that she was still, despite her supposed affair with the French lieutenant, a virgin (like the seven-times-married Sarah of the Apocryphal tale, who, though known to have been with men, was still intact: "The wicked demon Asmodeus had killed them before they had been with her as is customary with wives" [Tobit 3:8]):

> He took an abrupt downhill street toward the river Exe. . . . At the bottom a small redstone church. . . . Worn names and dates, last fossil remains of other lives, stared illegibly at him from the gravestones embedded in the floor. Perhaps the pacing up and down those stones . . . but something did finally bring calm and a kind of clarity. . . . A dialogue began to form. (*FLW*, 280, 282)

The river Exe, along whose shore Charles here finds graves that stir him to meditation, recalls the name of another river in the novel, one where there briefly appears, through the narrator's simile, a fatherly fish. Dr. Grogan, in whom Charles found both a kindred spirit and an elder's corrective counsel, was thought in Lyme Regis to be "as excellent a catch in the river Marriage as the salmon he sat down to that night had been in the river Axe" (*FLW*, 120–21). What Charles heard from Grogan, who preferred "neo-ontology" to paleontology (*FLW*, 125), he hears in that church along the river Exe from his own inner voice. He had become more involved in death than in life, like those with "mesmerized eyes on one's dead fathers. . . . It was as if his previous belief in the ghostly presence of the past had condemned him . . . to a life in the grave" (*FLW*, 286).

Or one could return to the Toby itself, trying once again to see it as Charles saw it, to take in all he absorbed as he glanced around the small room in the hotel where he had found Sarah. Just after the narcissus-bearing jug: "On the ceiling were blackened patches—fumes from the oil lamp; like so many spectral relics of countless drab past occupants of the room" (*FLW*, 271). It is in the nature of hotel rooms to have had previous occupants, but—as we will later see in *Daniel Martin*—it is in the nature of hotel rooms in Fowles to harbor the smoky traces of an Apocryphal ghost. Two pages later Charles and Sarah will appear to reenact the moment when Tobias

> and Sarah got rid of the demon by putting into effect the angel's advice, burning the heart and liver of the fish to "make a smoke" that would fill the bridal chamber and send Asmodeus packing (Tobit 8:3). A blanket serves the purpose here, the one covering Sarah Woodruff's legs: in a moment of silence, "unendurable in its emotion, its truth bursting to be spoken," there was suddenly a small explosion in the fireplace. One or two hot coals fell onto the edge of that blanket, which began to smolder. Charles quickly grabbed it away from her legs and put out the sparks. "A smell of singed wool filled the room." Sarah's legs were now bare, he covered them again with the blanket; her hand touched his, and four seconds later they were engaged in passionate embrace (*FLW*, 272–73).

If Charles is in some measure following the footsteps of Tobias, he is not able to pursue that ancient journey to its successful conclusion; for despite the intervention of a Pre-Raphaelite guardianship that takes Sarah under its wing, as a prior, Raphaelite one had done for Tobias, he does not win the girl. That failure does not prevent, however, allusions to this Apocryphal tale from recurring in Fowles's subsequent fiction, most notably in *Daniel Martin*, whose protagonist succeeds where Charles fails; indeed, this most recent of Fowles's novels has just the kind of unambiguous and clearly happy conclusion that the earlier works, particularly *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *The Magus*, avoided. Daniel Martin, as I hope to show, pursues a journey that seems even more closely to retrace Tobias's than did Charles's. Looking at Fowles's own itinerary from what is at present its midpoint, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (the third of five works of fiction), it almost seems as if the curve of frequency of allusion to the Apocryphal text steadily rises from *The Magus* (1965, but in large measure written earlier) and *The Collector* (1963), through *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969), *The Ebony Tower* (1974), and *Daniel Martin* (1977). It *almost* seems this way precisely because it is only because of what happens in the third novel that it makes any sense to speak of allusions in the first two to Tobit. Things become fairly explicit in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (we encounter a Toby, a Sarah, a [Pre-] Raphael—and a Ralph); but taken by themselves, the allusions in the first two novels would not have made one think of Tobias. Once, however, one sees the consistency with which, from the third novel on, elements of Tobit appear in Fowles's fiction, it is possible, though not necessarily compellingly so, to read these earlier appearances, which I will soon describe, as germs of what was later to become a continued development. As in any journey whose destination is not known in advance, there are at the beginning many possibilities; the ones that will later be seen to

have indicated the direction eventually taken were at first as indiscernible as the rest.

Nicholas Urfe, hero of *The Magus*, has hardly anything good to say about his father, whose death gave him "an almost immediate sense of relief, of freedom" (*M*, 19). But near the end of the novel, after Urfe has passed through his extraordinary learning experience at the hands of Maurice Conchis, a positive memory comes to him, a recollection of what may have been his father's sole excellence, a delicate touch with a fishing reel:

> I remembered as a very small boy lying on the bough of a willow over a Hampshire stream; I was watching my father casting for a trout. It was his one delicacy, casting a dry fly, posing it on the water as soft as thistledown. I remembered that moment when the fish floated slowly up and hovered beneath the fly, a moment endlessly prolonged in a heart-stopping excitement; then the sudden swift kick of the tail and the lightning switch of my father's strike; the ratcheting of the reel. (*M*, 622)

The son has somewhere learned the father's angling skill, for Nicholas is fishing for information from his predecessor at the Phraxos school; and at the moment that he remembers his father catching trout, he succeeds in getting him to take the bait ("The fish took the fly," he says of Mitford), and tell what he knows of Conchis, Julie, and Jane.

Frederick Clegg, the monstrous youth in *The Collector* who holds Miranda captive, was orphaned at two and raised by relatives. Uncle Dick "was as good as a father" to him (*C*, 10), and his happiest memories are of their journeys to the countryside, Clegg off collecting butterflies and Dick fishing.

> Uncle Dick died when I was fifteen. That was 1950. We went up to Tring Reservoir to fish, as usual I went off with my net and stuff. When I got hungry and came back to where I left him, there were a knot of people. I thought he'd caught a whopper. But he'd had a stroke. They got him home, but he never said another word or properly recognized any of us again. (*C*, 9)

When the lottery suddenly made him rich, Clegg's first thoughts were of the uncle who was a father to him ("besides Miranda of course"); he would have liked to "have given him the best rods and tackle and anything else he wanted. But it was not to be" (*C*, 10). And so he concentrated his attention and his newly acquired financial resources on Miranda, buying an isolated country house so that he could keep her prisoner where no one would find her, buried alive in an underground "crypt" (Miranda's term: *C*, 118).

Both Urfe and Clegg remember their father, or the man who took the father's place, doing what he did best, or most, or last—fishing. It is in this activity alone, transferred from a literal context to the fig-

urative one of fishing for information, that Nicholas Urfe could see, or would have wanted to see, any resemblance in himself to his father. The only thing that Urfe could pleasantly remember of his father, the only thing that he would like to think he inherited, is the same thing that completely surrounds Clegg's recollection of his fatherly uncle (minus the delicacy of the elder Urfe's skill), of whom it could almost be said that he died with his fishing boots on. Clegg's butterfly-hunting closely parallels his uncle's fishing, since they used to go out together to pursue each at the same time; Miranda Grey becomes the young lepidopterist's greatest catch, something akin to the kind of "whopper" that would have pleased Uncle Dick ("Easy does it," Clegg says to himself as he compares his captive to a caterpillar that takes months to develop, "as Uncle Dick used to say when he was into a big one" [*C*, 91])—something like a fish, but also something that Clegg is anxious to entomb.

There is a fishing scene in *The Ebony Tower* that might be able to hold our attention as well as Sarah's Toby jug did, for it seems a place where some indication of a deeper origin, the Apocryphal one, floats up to the surface of the text (like Urfe, fishing for information, we can sometimes savor that endlessly prolonged moment before we feel the tug on the line that Pirsig describes so well in his *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*: "Watch it the way you watch a line when fishing and before long, as sure as you live, you'll get a little nibble, a little fact asking in a timid, humble way if you're interested in it.")[6] And like the Toby jug, it becomes in Fowles's hands a ceramic vessel:

> Sally takes Tom's hand and leads him to the plastic box to show what Daddy is looking for. The little boy stares, then flinches back when one of the crayfish tries to jump out. Sally kneels, her bare arm around the child's shoulders. Like a transfer scene on a Regency teacup . . . for those to whom tea is not enough. (*ET*, 246)

The tugging fact here is that the "fish" (baptized thus by an ancient etymological confusion that obscured its original form, the French *écrevisse*) behaves like the Apocryphal fish, frightening the son by leaping out. "Daddy" here is Peter, a television producer interested in doing a documentary on Roland Barthes. Sally is his girl friend of the moment, though the direction the story takes will lead him to a woodland rendezvous with Catherine, with whom he shares two things (though little else: Catherine dislikes the "wretched little coffin-man" [*ET*, 258] and allows herself to be made love to only by averting her face), an interest in Barthes and the death of a spouse. Catherine is more haunted by the ghost of her husband, a writer (*ET*, 264) who committed suicide (*ET*, 252), than Peter could be by his "departed wife" (*ET*, 276)—"far from skeleton," the man for whom Catherine

grieves beckons to her, "waiting, every moment now . . . smiling, alive, almost fleshed" (*ET*, 278).

Peter is a father in this story, at least nominally ("Oh well. My celebrated intermittent father act" [*ET*, 264]); but in the story that precedes this one in the *Ebony Tower* collection, another Peter is a son, whose father disappears, very possibly a carefully prepared suicide, drowned, his body rigged with weights so that it would not float up to the surface ("Drowned bodies need a lot of weight to stay down" [*ET*, 227]), buried in the waters of a pond named, appropriately, Tetbury. Despite the intuition of Peter's girl friend, who becomes the investigating sergeant's girl friend, that this is where the missing man lies, nobody with the means to do so can be persuaded to try to fish him out.

The reader of the five stories of which *The Ebony Tower* is composed faces a similarly unfinished task, that of drawing out the interconnected threads that Fowles has delicately woven—or, to change a metaphor, to reel in what he has, like Nicholas's father, delicately cast, to see what lies buried beneath the surface of these tales that advertise themselves as *Variations*, an earlier, rejected title for which

> the first professional readers, who do know my works, could see no justification . . . beyond a very private mirage in the writer's mind. I have deferred to their judgment and, beyond this mention of it, kept the illusion to myself. (*ET*, 109)

What they are variations of is by no means apparent; at most we know that they are "variations both on certain themes in previous books of mine and in methods of narrative presentation" (*ET*, 109).

But we do know something more now about certain hidden themes in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, the fact that there are names, characters, and turns of plot that seem to have their counterparts in another text, one that preexists Fowles's work as the Toby jug preexisted Sarah's use of it. And we also know that at certain moments, when talk turns to fathers, *The Magus* and *The Collector* join in the union of fathers and fishing, a conjunction whose third term is death. The story of Tobias and the fish has that tripartite unity because of its own turns of plot: the father blinded because he slept like a fish, with open eyes; the fish that left the water like a corpse that comes unburied; the complementarity of fishing and interment. The son who imitates his father by a kind of fishing in *The Magus*; the father in *The Collector* who became corpse-like while fishing (stricken, "he never said another word or properly recognized any of us again"); the grandson of a disturber of neolithic graves who found what he first thought was a corpse while searching for buried fish in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*; the

fishing father in one story of *The Ebony Tower* whose namesake in another, somehow related, story has a father probably buried in water—these fishers, fathers, and corpses may all be variations on a certain noncanonical book; and the unity of *The Ebony Tower* that justified its original title may be discoverable by reading it in the light of what we have seen in *The French Lieutenant's Woman.*

But it may not be. There is an obstacle in our path, for the second of the five stories is beyond the author's control. It was written by someone else and only translated here. What is more, the first of the five is "a variation of a more straightforward kind" (*ET*, 109) on none other than that second, borrowed tale. And its foreign influence does not stop there, for the fifth story also shows signs of being under its power. What a "noncanonical" reading of the collection would have to do to succeed is to provide a theory to interpret not only more phenomena than its rival, the second story, but the very appearance of that story in Fowles's book.

The stories in the order of their appearance are:

1. "The Ebony Tower": Title piece of the collection, its setting is the woods of Brittany, where David Williams, art critic and sometime artist, has journeyed to interview Henry Breasley, a septuagenarian artist of some stature who holds quite different views from David on the nature and purpose of art. Their dinner-table conversation becomes a conflict of generations as Breasley gives an intemperate display of his disgust with modern nonrepresentational art. Though he has a wife awaiting him in Paris, Williams is tempted by Diana, "the Mouse," one of Breasley's two young assistants, during his brief stay, though in the end he is disappointed at his inability to sin boldly.

2. "Eliduc" is preceded by an authorial note that speaks of the variations of which the book is composed and introduces the *lai* of Marie de France, translated here, as a source for the preceding story—"of its mood, as also partly of its theme and setting" (*ET*, 109). Eliduc was a nobleman who was compelled to leave his native Brittany, having lost favor with his king. In his exile he became a knight errant, rendering heroic service to an English king in what is today Exeter (scene of Sarah's erotic hotel room encounter with Charles), against whom another sovereign had been waging war because his proposal of marriage to the Exeter king's daughter had been turned down. The princess falls in love with Eliduc, and he with her. But he has a wife at home, and now must go back, for he has learned that the Breton king has had a change of heart and is in need of his services. He fights his king's battles, makes peace, and then returns once more to England, where

he secretly meets princess Guilliadun and makes plans to bring her back to Brittany. A storm during the channel crossing, however, provokes the sailors to threaten to throw the princess overboard, for they know Eliduc is already married. But Guilliadun did not know, and the shock of learning it now causes her to fall into a coma so deep that Eliduc thinks she is dead. He resolves to have her buried in holy ground, and has a place in mind, a hermit's chapel in the Breton woods—the same Coetminais region that Henry Breasley would later inhabit—but when he arrives there, he finds that the hermit himself, with whom he "had often spoken" and of whom he had been "very fond" (*ET*, 129, 131), had died just the week before, his body buried in the very chapel where Eliduc had thought to bury the princess. Though his men want to go ahead and dig a grave for her, Eliduc hesitates, desiring first to obtain advice on how to consecrate the ground with some abbey or convent. He leaves her body by the altar. Meanwhile his wife sends out a spy who discovers the miraculous corpse, which shows no signs of decay. She feels sorry for them both, and as she sits by the body weeping, a weasel darts out of a wall toward the princess. A servant kills it; its mate emerges and sees that it has died, then goes out and returns with a red flower in its teeth, places it in the mouth of the dead weasel, which suddenly comes back to life. Eliduc's wife then places the flower on the princess's lips, and she also revives. The wife yields to her husband's love for the girl, choosing to become a nun so that he can marry Guilliadun.

Being shared by two women is what strikes Henry Breasley, the elderly painter in the first story, as a resemblance between *Eliduc* and his own idyllic retirement in the Brittany woods, where he affords himself the luxury of two young women:

> Then we went off on Marie de France and *Eliduc*. "Damn' good tale. Read it several times. What's that old Swiss bamboozler's name. Jung, yes? His sort of stuff. Archetypal and all that." . . .
>
> "Those two gels now. Two gels in *Eliduc*."
>
> He began to tell its story. (*ET*, 51)

Yet as that first story unfolds, it becomes increasingly apparent that it is David Williams who really seems to merit Eliduc's role; for though he has a wife at home, he comes very close to playing "knight errant" to Diana's "sleeping princess" (*ET*, 90–91). And *Eliduc*'s weasel also makes an unmistakable appearance in Williams's life, but one too late to help the almost-erring husband obtain the woman he desired. His car crushes it as he leaves the Breasley estate; "a trickle of blood, like a red flower, had spilt from the gaping mouth" of the tiny corpse (*ET*, 99). Such a misplaced event effectively, if a little obviously (so obviously

one could hardly fail to notice it, as if it were a false clue), alludes to the older story and at the same time shows how the variation can have an outcome quite different from its theme's (as Charles's fate is a much less happy one than Tobias's).

3. "Poor Koko," like "The Ebony Tower," features a conflict of opinions between an older man and a younger, with the rather complementary difference that whereas in the first story Henry Breasley is the aggressor, sharpening his critique of modern trends in painting into a personal attack on David Williams—

> "Bumboy. You a bumboy, Wilson?"
> This time the Mouse did not bother to correct him; or David, to answer.
> "On your knees and trousers down. Solves all, doesn't it?" (*ET*, 42)

—in "Poor Koko" it is the younger man who both insults and injures the older, who takes it as passively as did Williams. This third story is the account of an elderly writer whose peace is disturbed by a young burglar who does more than steal: he throws away the man's glasses, rendering him nearly blind, lectures him on the inequities of capitalist society, and burns the manuscript and notes of his work in progress, a critical biography of Thomas Love Peacock.

The story's title is curious. Though one might have thought, the narrator tells us, that Koko was an idiosyncratic spelling for the clown Coco, it is in fact a Japanese word for "correct filial behavior, the proper attitude of son to father" (*ET*, 176). The title, then, makes the conflict between the old man and the burglar explicitly one between father and son. But it may contain yet another clue—itself a pun ("poor clown," we are told, would in fact "do for a first level of meaning" [*ET*, 175]), "Poor Coco/Koko" is very close to the name of the subject of the old man's manuscript and notes, whose destruction by the intruder is a source of great puzzlement. And that name is itself suggestive, evoking both a bird and eyes, the iridescent *ocelli* of the peacock's tail that justified its mythic identification with hundred-eyed Argus.

Something similar to what we saw in the appearance of Sarah's Toby jug seems at work here. There, two levels of understanding were revealed by the narrator: the first was what impelled Sarah to buy the Toby—"she fell for the smile"; the second was what led the narrator to collect the very same jug, his knowledge of its real value, the authenticity of its origin—"unlike her, I fell for the Ralph Wood part of it." In somewhat the same way, the reader of "Poor Koko" is informed that, although he may have fallen for the smile of the clown, there really is a more meaningful origin to the title. But we have seen that the explanation of the Toby jug's deeper sense is itself a false bottom, concealing yet

an older and more meaningful origin, one to which a meditation on the name Toby would lead. In fact, the "Ralph Wood part" could itself give way to another name, Roughwood, the surname into which Sarah eventually transformed her original Woodruff. The coincidence is rather similar to that of P...Coco/Koko and Peacock, and it is highly suggestive—as if Sarah's ultimate (for Charles will never pry her loose from there) retreat at the end of the novel into a Pre-Raphaelite household under the name of Roughwood were, on some deeper level of the text, a return to her own origins; now a "Roughwood"—that is, on that level of a novel where the text, like a dreamer, made up as it is of words, associates things by their names, a "Ralph Wood"—she becomes a companion piece to the Toby, both now revealed as products of the same hand, whether one thinks of the potter or the Apocryphal author.

What then is the deeper meaning of "Poor Koko" whose existence the narrator's linguistic explanation both signals and hides? The place to look is surely the name of the author to which the old man in the story is devoting his writing and research, all the more because it is the seemingly senseless destruction of these notes and manuscript pages that poses the great enigma of the story. Like Ralph Wood, Peacock has a historical reality of his own, and is a favorite of the author's,[7] facts that could camouflage his real importance here. What he does in "Poor Koko" is to occupy the old man's attention so completely, in the opinion of the young thief, that he prevents him from seeing the reality of the present. Absorbed in the study of what he described to the burglar as "a long-dead novelist" (*ET*, 153), he was less interested in the present than the past, in the living than the dead—like Charles Smithson, who reproached himself for becoming like the fossils he used to collect, for having "mesmerized eyes on one's dead fathers instead of on one's unborn sons" (*FLW*, 285–86). "Man, your trouble is you don't listen hard enough," the thief tells him, shortly after he rejects the young man's suggestion that he turn his writing skill to a subject closer at hand, the thief himself (*ET*, 161–62). Later, he admits to a deadened power of perception: "I believe my young demon was right in one thing. I *was* guilty of a deafness" (*ET*, 175).

This deafness is paralleled by another failure in perception, this one imposed on the writer by his demonic intruder, the blindness that resulted from the thief's throwing his thick-lensed glasses out the window. A faith in the author's precision in his choice of words, a value the old man defends against the careless speech of the young burglar ("I am convinced that the fatal clash between us was of one who trusts and reveres language and one who suspects and resents it" [*ET*, 175]), can lead us to see an even closer parallel between his situation and Henry

Breasley's than that which resides in the fact that each is an older man arguing with a younger. Breasley was blind, too, for a while; over a dinner of *quenelles* of pike (a fish about which there was something strange, at least to the guard dog who tried to attack it when it was landed that afternoon [*ET*, 27]) and lamb, much drinking, and considerably heated argument with David Williams, there began to be "a glaze in Breasley's eyes. He did not seem drunk . . . ; just that ocular symptom of possession by an old demon" (*ET*, 37). Strictly speaking, then, his blindness and the old scholar's in "Poor Koko" were both caused by some kind of demon, a word the robbery victim twice used to describe his assailant (*ET*, 169, 175).

At first, the *O.E.D.* reminds us, a demon was "a supernatural being of a nature intermediate between that of gods and men; an inferior divinity, spirit, genius (including the souls or ghosts of deceased persons . . .)"; the connotation of inherent evil was a later, non-Greek addition. It is not clear that the original sense might not be at work in "Poor Koko." For what if this were something more than a story about a burglary, and something more than the account of a gratuitous act of violence? What if the young visitor were something more than a hoodlum whose way of life and manner of speech merely confirmed the critic of Peacock in his old habits of thought? The old man is from the beginning amazed that the thief should take such an interest in his own personality: "Of all the fictional horrors connected with the situation that I had ever seen or read of, not one had included motivational analysis of the victim from its prime cause [i.e., from the perpetrator of the crime]" (*ET*, 148). What if the demonic intruder were some messenger from beyond the old man's normal experience, come to teach him a lesson, to make him see a connection between his practice of blocking off life's reality with the screen of his absorption in Peacock (as a character in *Daniel Martin*, likewise an old man, will say of how he spent so much of his own life in the study of an ancient culture: "I saw my papyri as screens I had put to hide what I did not wish to understand" [*DM*, 559]) and the semi-blindness through which he is made to witness the events of that night?

What makes it possible to speak of such things is that there is something that organizes the text of "Poor Koko" beyond the old man's reminiscence. Fowles, obviously. One can see it more concretely, though, in the way the very wordplay in which the narrator (the old man) indulges in his discussion of the story's title escapes his control. He only meant it to lead his reader to read "clown" where he should read "filial behavior." But like the sorcerer's apprentice, one soon discovers that the magic word, once pronounced, is not easily restrained. The old man

sees himself as the keeper of a magic power, that of words, and he supposes that what the thief "must have resented most was the application of this precious and denied gift of word-magic to no more than another obscure word-magician," Peacock (*ET*, 175). But the particular instance of "word-magic" that the narrator displays, "Poor Coco/Koko," finds its own application to that other word-magician, apparently without his knowledge.

And even the uncultured youth seems able to manipulate the magical *cock* that floats between Coco and Koko, and from there to the name of the writer in whom his victim is so engrossed. Though he surely does so unknowingly, his parting shot is a gesture that prompts an extended semiotic analysis on the part of the elderly critic:

> His hand moved; I thought he was going to strike me. But all I was presented with, a foot from my face, as if to make sure that even someone as "blind" as I was could not mistake the gesture, was the yellow hand clenched into a fist—and incomprehensibly, with the thumb cocked high. The sign of mercy, when there was no mercy. (*ET*, 164–65)

He held his hand in "that inexplicable position" for at least five seconds. Later, thinking back on all that had happened, the old man began to see "an important clue in that curious last gesture" (*ET*, 172). It did not signify mercy; nor did it have for the young man any of the meanings he could observe in its use among the workmen demolishing a building across the street from his London apartment—"yes," "I understand," or "stop." The aggression clearly present in it ruled these meanings out, and led him eventually to recognize it in a football player's salute before a game, a promise of victory.

But he may have missed the point. In his position, of course, a mere character in a story that is itself part of a larger whole, a variation among others if we can believe the author's promise, he could not be expected to see that this gesture that he thinks is a clue and tries so hard to explain is a kind of semiotic pun, whose translation into English, which he writes out four times, three in the space of less than a page, is yet another play on the word that links the story's ambiguous title to the author with a fowl's name, a *cocked* thumb.

And, speaking of names, of which there is a conspicuous absence among the real characters of this story, the only one given, even briefly, to the demonic visitor evokes a familiar ghost, or angel. *Raffles* ("I got up and started to dress," the victim of the crime recounts, "and to review what I had deduced of the new-style Raffles downstairs" [*ET*, 155]), Hornung's stylish criminal hero, has more than one good reason to be a clever anagram on Raphael, the angel whose intervention cured a father's blindness. One is that anagrams do function in Fowles: Alison,

"an anagram made flesh" (*M*, 668), as "the better part of Nicholas" in *The Magus* (*M*, 271), and "S. Wolfe" for Fowles himself in *Daniel Martin* (*DM*, 17). Another is that Raphael, already present in the name of the household where Sarah finds refuge, the Pre-Raphaelites', has already found an anagram in the Christian name of the man who first created the Toby whose appearance and reappearance in that novel allow us to see the relevance of the Apocryphal tale.

4. Foul play is a possibility Inspector Jennings must consider in the case of the disappearance of John Marcus Fielding in "The Enigma," a detective story with no solution—or at least none officially sanctioned by the narrator. We are engaged in any event in a quite different work of detection, trying to discover whether the stories in *The Ebony Tower* are indeed variations, as their author says they are, and if so, on what original theme. The trouble with Fielding's disappearance, as Jennings puts it in a conversation with Isobel Dodgson, girl friend of the missing man's son, is that if it were fiction the author would have to be faulted for having forgotten "to plant any decent leads" (*ET*, 223). But there are a number of leads in what we have so far read that point to a possible solution to the enigma of the supposed variations, a solution that is not without relevance to Fielding's fate.

More than one reviewer of *The Ebony Tower* has claimed for it a unity arising from the authority of the author's "Personal Note," or at any rate from a misreading of what is said there concerning the place of *Eliduc* in the collection. The source of the difficulty is probably the following sentence:

> However, *The Ebony Tower* is also a variation of a more straightforward kind, and the source of its mood, as also partly of its theme and setting, is so remote and forgotten—though I believe seminal in the history of fiction—that I should like to resurrect a fragment of it. (*ET*, 109)

That fragment is *Eliduc*, but whether *The Ebony Tower* named here is the book or the story is not immediately clear. Rene Kuhn Bryant must have thought it meant the book when she wrote that "Fowles has contrived five variations on a single source, the Celtic romance. . . . Whether others would recognize a common base and see a web of intricate relationships among these five stories, without the prompting proferred in 'a personal note' inserted in the middle [*sic*] of the book, is debatable."[8] Likewise a reviewer in the *Economist* comments that "the other stories [other than the first] are equally satisfying explorations of the relations proposed in 'Eliduc,' if much less obviously so."[9] So much less obvious are the ways in which such a story as "Poor Koko," to cite a particularly unlikely case, is a variation on *Eliduc* that very little has actually been said about this "web of intricate relation-

ships." Barry Olshen, in a book that surveys all of Fowles's works up to and including *Daniel Martin*, argues two points, however: one, that the "courtly love stress on 'keeping faith,' especially in sexual relations, which is central to 'Eliduc,' is an important specific theme running through . . . the stories of *The Ebony Tower*"; the other, that the stories

> contain variations on the motif of the ordeal so characteristic of the medieval romance. Like the medieval knight errant, each of Fowles's protagonists can be seen to undergo a kind of ordeal at a crucial point in his or her life. The experience upsets the character's equilibrium, thereby altering his self-image and the direction in which he hitherto thought his life had been heading.[10]

One can see that this may be true of David Williams, the young man in "The Ebony Tower" who is troubled by his encounter with Breasley's muse; much less so of the unnamed Peacock biographer in "Poor Koko," who though he admitted to a deafness will hardly change the direction of his life; John Marcus Fielding certainly, if one accepts Isobel's theory of his disappearance, a suicide brought on by a revulsion at the direction that his life had taken; only with difficulty in "The Cloud," for Peter is a mere sexual adventurer, and though Catherine is undergoing a crisis of grief over her husband's death, it is hard to see her in the role of a knight errant. When one separates out the knightly connotation that allows Olshen to describe as medieval the kind of stressful experience that the protagonists in many, or most, of the stories ever written undergo, there is little left that is specific to *The Ebony Tower*. His other argument, that courtly love and faith-keeping pervade the stories, is in no way applicable to "Poor Koko" (where there is no love), "The Enigma" (where keeping faith does not come into question), or "The Cloud" (where it doesn't matter).[11]

But perhaps the greatest obstacle to seeing a "stress on 'keeping faith'" and a life-changing ordeal as central themes uniting the foreign body in the text with the other four stories is precisely that one does not place stress in *Eliduc* on the high value of keeping faith, nor does the knight in question undergo any ordeal at all. Things are too easy for Eliduc for there to be any chance that his life will change—a life characterized by repeated faith-breaking, to his wife, the princess, and her father. As Constance Hieatt points out, Eliduc is typical of the men in Marie de France's lays: selfish, opportunistic, and totally at odds with the chivalric ideal.[12]

So what then is the nature of the relation of *Eliduc* to the other stories? And of what kind of variations is *The Ebony Tower* composed that it could justify its author's original title, *Variations*? Ought one to seek a model in the musical variations that keep appearing in Fowles's

novels, Bach's Goldberg—a vivid memory for Miranda Grey of a moment when she felt the ultimate sadness at the heart of the universe (*C*, 176), the music Maurice Conchis played to reduce his German lieutenant to tears (*M*, 422), "the precise baroque complexity" that suggested to Daniel Martin, listening with Jane, "a deep intimation of other languges, meaning-systems, besides that of words" (*DM*, 600)? If so, one would find a collection of variations that do not once repeat the melody of their theme, but that are united by a common harmonic ground, first found in the original aria. And every third variation but the last is a kind of variation on itself, forming a progression of nine canons each based on a distance one step greater than the last.[13] Such a structure allows each of the thirty Goldberg Variations to have a melody of its own and yet still be faithful to the theme, a freedom that the original title suggests: "Aria with Diverse Variations." And the subset of canons, linked to each other in ways that the other variations are not, as well as engaged in variations on themselves, increases the measure of that liberty as well as the complex precision of which Fowles's hero speaks. But it also suggests ways in which one could interpret the place of *The Ebony Tower* in the Fowles corpus since 1969: *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, as we have seen, and *Daniel Martin*, as I will argue, both allude to the story of Tobias in the manner of diverse variations on a common theme. Their story lines bear much less resemblance to each other than they do to that of Tobit. *The Ebony Tower*, too, plays upon that Apocryphal theme, but in a more complicated way. Like the Goldberg's canons, it has its own imitative impulses; the stories allude to each other in fragmentary ways—but not always with reference to *Eliduc*: we have already seen, for example, that "The Ebony Tower" and "Poor Koko" have parallel confrontations between a younger man and an older during which the older man undergoes a kind of blindness, a situation for which there is no equivalent in *Eliduc*. This old man's blindness becomes specifically a father's blindness in "Poor Koko," thanks to the title given the story and its explanation; *The Ebony Tower* thus has at its center an important element of the Tobias story. Whether it constitutes an allusion depends on what is going on around it, in the rest of the book—and in the rest of Fowles. The author's talk about variations both with *The Ebony Tower* and in its relation to other works of his gives us the freedom to think "laterally," as Isobel does to arrive at her solution of "The Enigma" (*ET*, 221). We might also bear in mind what another of Fowles's knowing women, Catherine in "The Cloud," says in explaining another mystery (Roland Barthes): "But the context is a kind of countermanding sign. It trumps" (*ET*, 261).

What is going on on the other side of "Poor Koko" is yet another argument between a father and a son, a political dispute whose active phase ended years before, when the left-leaning son gave up trying to convince his right-of-center father (*ET*, 200). Despite enormous differences of context and tone, it would have had some basic similarities to the dispute between the scholar and the thief in "Poor Koko," for both arguments involved issues of property and social justice. The elderly writer is unmoved by his intruder's appeals to vague Marxist ideals, yet he does come away from the experience with an awareness of some shortcoming on his part, a certain deafness; likewise, John Marcus Fielding, according to Isobel, though not necessarily undergoing a change of politics, did acquire some new knowledge:

> All this dawns on him. . . . Slowly. . . . He's like a fossil—while he's still alive. . . . Even his own son despises him. . . . From being very privileged and very successful, he feels himself very absurd and very failed. (*ET*, 224, 226)

This realization, according to Isobel's version of what might have happened (an exegesis that stands unchallenged in the story—the only response Inspector Jennings can make is to fall in love with her; it was a seductive solution), led Fielding to take his own life, drowning himself in the ancestral pond. The attraction of such a death is that, if properly done, it leaves no body. What Fielding wants is not just self-immolation but a scenario that "will get him immortality of a kind. . . . The one thing people never forget is the unsolved. . . . On condition that it stays that way. If he's traced, found, then it all crumbles" (*ET*, 226). He's untraceable because he's buried at Tetbury, with water for a headstone.

This, too, like the paternal blindness in "Poor Koko," does not remind us so much of *Eliduc* (where there is, nevertheless, a buried fatherly figure, but in earth, and in a marked grave) as it does of another story, the one in which something suddenly rises up out of the water in a manner that Fielding strove to prevent:

> "He still has to sink himself. Drowned bodies need a lot of weight to stay down."
>
> "Something inflatable? An air mattress? Car tire? Then deflate it when he's floated far enough out?"
>
> "You're beginning to give me nightmares." (*ET*, 227)

A chain of circumstances linked the blinded father in Tobit to the corpses that he buried and to sleeping, open-eyed fish—and that peculiar father in turn to the fish that rose up to meet Tobias. Fielding, the water-buried father, here lies in a context that places him alongside

another "father" with Apocryphal qualities: a concern with the dead, and a blindness that, as the story progresses, becomes more and more a metaphor for the deadening of the senses that has resulted from his exclusive preoccupation with a long-dead Peacock—an author whose name, already implicated in a series of word associations, brings us back to the association of birds with eyes that lies at the origin of Tobit's blindness.

5. If "Poor Koko" and "The Enigma" seem to bear little relation to *Eliduc*, the second of the stories in the collection and a text that has sometimes appeared, because of its obvious difference in origin (being Fowles's translation of a medieval tale) and because of what is said in the "Personal Note" that precedes it, to be a likely candidate for the role of the theme on which the four other stories would be variations, "The Cloud" on the other hand, fifth and last tale in *The Ebony Tower*, does appear to repeat some of the characters and events of Marie de France's lay. Catherine, like the comatose princess in *Eliduc*, behaves as if she were dead. In the beginning of "The Cloud," she "lay stretched, as if biered," in the sun of Central France (not, by the way, the locale of *Eliduc*, which took place partly in Brittany); and toward the end of the story "Catherine lies, composing and decomposed, writing and written. . . . Young dark-haired corpse with a bitter mouth" (*ET*, 279). Part of her reason for feeling this way is the distinct impression that she is a character in someone else's novel (a feeling that Isobel attributed to Fielding in her scenario of his disappearance): "as if one had done it before one had, knowing it planned, proven, inevitable" (*ET*, 278).

Where had one done it—in *Eliduc*, or somewhere else? The scene that Catherine is about to reenact, with Peter, suggests the former, but not uniquely so. Peter is wandering in the wilderness, having left the picnicking party behind. After a half-hour in the brush and boulders that lie between the river and the cliff, he decides to return. The way back is not entirely clear. "It was like a natural maze, though the cliffs behind meant one knew roughly what direction to take" (*ET*, 279). Peter is in fact wandering in a landscape very similar to the Undercliff where Charles Smithson, in his search for echinoderm fossils, stumbled across the sleeping body of Sarah Woodruff, which he took at first to be a corpse—that, too, had been a rough terrain wedged between the cliff and the shore, a kind of marginal no-man's-land of more than usual wildness (*FLW*, 58).

> He had misjudged the distance. . . . Then he nearly trod on a snake.
>
> It was gone almost before he saw it. But some sort of pattern on its back? He was almost sure. It must have been an adder. It would certainly be an adder when he got back to tell them. (*ET*, 279)

The snake will prove useful; Peter's desire to find a way to profit from its appearance, perhaps to add a bit to make it more interesting, is already evident. He will soon get a more immediate opportunity. "Then suddenly his little five-minute ordeal was at an end. He came on a path that led downhill toward the river; it was faint and sinuous, but it had purpose" (*ET*, 279). It will lead him to Catherine, lying on her back in her underclothes and remembering a graveyard seduction ("As he took one once, in a churchyard; and wrote *Having among graves*. One did not like: the poem, not the having" [*ET*, 278]). The snake Peter glimpsed gives him an excuse to break in on her privacy: "Sorry. Thought I'd better warn you. I've just seen an adder" (*ET*, 280). What happens next, after an application of sun cream, justifies Fowles's publisher's blurbs about sensual storytelling. Though he doesn't entirely revive her (Catherine will remain behind when the group, Peter included, leaves; some readers have thought, without much justification, that she commits suicide at the end), Peter does gain entry by means of the snake, as Eliduc won his undisturbed enjoyment of Guilliadun through another small, darting animal, the weasel that bore the magic of her resurrection.

Not only here but in another instance as well does "The Cloud" allude to *Eliduc*—and sweep up "The Ebony Tower" in its net, strongly suggesting through what it has in common with that story that both are somehow under *Eliduc*'s spell. It is the made-up tale that Catherine finally found herself telling Emma, Annabel's daughter, after having waited some time for the "ghost of even the simplest narrative" to appear (*ET*, 265). "Once upon a time there was a princess": this was almost as far as the fiction went; the rest is Catherine's own story, the story of that day—the picnic, her withdrawal from the family group, her hope of rescue. But one detail gives a special meaning, of which Catherine must remain unaware, to the twist with which she makes the story more vivid for her listener by revealing that it happened in "this very same place . . . just where we're sitting" (*ET*, 268), for to say that the princess, shy and timid as she was, looked

> "Like a mouse."
> "Just like a mouse." (*ET*, 268)

is to bring us back to another story that happened in "this very same place," in the pages of the same book we're reading now, that of Diana in "The Ebony Tower," whose other and perhaps more-often-used name was "the Mouse" (*ET*, 18 ff.). Like Catherine, who described herself as "the odd woman out" (*ET*, 240), "Di's the odd one out" (*ET*, 67). Both (or all three, when one counts Catherine's fictive princess) inhabit the woods and await a prince's rescue.

It is not the fairy tale Catherine tells Emma that recalls Marie de France's lay, but rather its combination with Catherine's own situation later in "The Cloud." The reader can make the connection between Catherine's princess quality, gathered from the way she retells her own story when she spins a tale for Emma, and her corpse-like nature toward the end, when Peter discovers her after finding the snake. That the first story, the one that bears the title of the collection, is a "straightforward variation" on *Eliduc* is something for which we almost have the author's word, if we understand that statement in the "Personal Note" ("However, *The Ebony Tower* is also a variation of a more straightforward kind, and the source of its mood, as also partly of its theme and setting." [*ET*, 109]) in the only way that makes any sense, given the absence of medieval mood, theme, or setting in "Poor Koko" and "The Enigma": that it refers to the story, not the book.[14]

The influence of *Eliduc* is, then, only partial. And the recurrence of blinded or comotose or water-buried fathers in the first three of the four stories that Fowles wrote in the collection bears the trace of another, more ancient source. The stories are united, but not as much by *Eliduc* as by something else. Even "The Ebony Tower," the story the author puts forward as a variation on the medieval text, has elements of the Tobias story—the blinded father (that Breasley is to Williams as a father to a son becomes more and more apparent as one reads "Poor Koko" and "The Enigma," where much of their situation is repeated) and the suspicious fish (the pike that spooked the dog). And "The Cloud," last of the four Fowles stories in the book, has a "fish" that threatens to leap out at a father's son, in a scene the author freezes on a teacup, a ceramic to set beside the Ralph Wood one with which we began.

Like the fish that the Apocryphal youth disassembled, assigning under the angel's guidance some of its inner fragments to one purpose and some to another, realizing that his catch could serve both to rescue the maiden and cure his father's blindness, *The Ebony Tower* also lends itself to a certain dissection (read, consumed, victim of the hunger it excites in the reader, it can resemble the plump salmon that "lay in anatomized ruins" after Charles and Grogan were done with it [*FLW*, 122]), and a multiple use. Like another set of variations, Elgar's fourteen "Enigma" variations, Fowles's suite may appear to follow one theme only to point to another, a hidden, enigmatic one of which the apparent theme is really the counterpoint.[15] Like Fowles, Elgar announced the presence of his theme, but declined to identify it. To find that the second of Fowles's five stories, the one he did not write, is really a counterpart pointing to another, in this case Apocryphal, theme

is not necessarily to discover that Marie de France was retelling the more ancient story. As Catherine pointed out, explaining Barthes, the context countermands (we will later see how this is true in Barthes, in a book Catherine hadn't read); the four stories with which Fowles envelops *Eliduc* have the power to trump, to transpose, to change the key of this story about a corpse revived in the presence of a buried father.

Williams's relationship to Breasley, the thief's to the elderly scholar, and Peter Fielding's to his father (as well as, in a larger context, Urfe's to Conchis and Charles's to Grogan) create a harmonic context that invites us to consider Eliduc's relation to the monk in the Coetminais woods. The knight's fondness for the hermit and the fact that they often conferred, as if he came to seek advice, are explicitly mentioned (*ET*, 129, 131).[16] It is striking that the two bodies, the hermit and the princess, the dead and the living, should occupy practically the same space, the chapel where a miracle is about to happen. Why it takes place there may well have something to do with that double presence—as if the tomb could not hold more than one corpse. Eliduc would in fact have buried the princess alive had the hermit not died, had his own grave not occupied the very ground intended for her.

It may also have something to do with the kind of strange conjunction of father and bride that the Tobias story brings about with its amphibolous fish—itself ambiguous, representing, as in a dream, both the father left behind and the erotic awakening to come (more recent translations—the Jerusalem and *The New English Bible*—reveal that the fish's attentions were really directed toward that part of the boy's body which in other contexts often stands for the penis: "and a huge fish leapt out of the water and tried to swallow the boy's foot" [Tobit 6:2 in *The New English Bible*]),[17] the fish also bears a double content in a literal sense. It finds its counterpart in the weasel: To save the girl, one had first to seize the creature ("Catch it! . . . Don't let it escape!" [*ET*, 131]; "'Take hold of the fish!' And the boy seized the fish and threw it up on the land" [Tobit 6:3]), then take possession of the magic that lay inside (the red flower in the weasel's mouth; the organs of the fish). Not by itself does the weasel form part of the counterpoint that Fowles's *Eliduc* (an attribution that has to do not with any departure in translation from the original but with the fact that he makes it part of another text, that of the stories in *The Ebony Tower*; it is now, for the moment, his), like Elgar's enigma theme, forms with his hidden but traceable theme, for its magic most likely has another origin, one not related, as far as one could tell without a great deal more spadework, to Tobit. Jean Rychner in his edition of Marie's *Lais* speaks of "an old tradition according to which certain animals who know of the resus-

citating herb allow themselves to be caught by someone who is then able to bring a corpse back to life."[18] Fowles's *Ebony Tower* stories, however, repeat and vary *Eliduc*'s weasel in such a way as to transform it into something like a fish: the weasel appeared as a weasel in "The Ebony Tower," when David Williams ran over it with his car, though not before first appearing in the guise it will later assume in "The Cloud," that of a snake:

> Something orange-brown . . . oddly sinuous, almost like a snake, but too small for a snake, ran across the road. . . . It was a weasel. (*ET*, 99)[19]

It appears as a snake when it crosses Peter's path in "The Cloud"; the impression that he could read some sort of pattern on its back leads him to say it was an adder. But another pattern, more readily verifiable, emerges with this sighting of the serpent, for it is the second time a snake has caught Peter and the reader's attention. Earlier that day:

> "Daddy! Daddy! There's a snake!" . . .
> "Tom, keep back!" shouts Peter.
> . . . They see the snake swimming sinuously along the stone bank, its head making a ripple. . . . The snake disappears among some yellow iris in the shallow water at the foot of the terrace wall. With Peter everything is always about to disappear. (*ET*, 237)

The snake that Peter found before he saw Catherine was also glimpsed at the point of vanishing ("It was gone almost before he saw it"); the earlier snake prefigures the adder's appearance, differing from it in one important regard: like Tobias's river monster, it is first seen in the water, becoming dangerous only should it leave the river and approach the boy on the shore. The trail of a persistent adjective (and adverb) links this sinuously swimming snake not only to the path, "faint and sinuous," that suddenly appeared to Peter after his serpentine encounter, winding its way down to Catherine and the river, but also to the "oddly sinuous" weasel in "The Ebony Tower" that so clearly finds its origin in the weasel that led to the princess's rescue.

Peter's son Tom's discovery of the snake in the water is paralleled by his father's pursuit, later that day, of other fauna in the same river. In a passage quoted earlier, Tom is led to see "what Daddy is looking for." This time it is the son who is frightened: "The little boy stares, then flinches back when one of the crayfish tries to jump out" (*ET*, 246). His fear recalls the alarm that may have prompted Breasley's dog to attack the fish as it came out of the water, reeled in on the fisherman's line; that incident from the first story in the collection, which finds its

altered reflection in the last, remains a troubling detail in the background of "The Ebony Tower," even if only because the reason it happened is never explained. The fisherman in question, Breasley's peasant gardener, had murdered his father years before (*ET*, 62). Had the dog not been with him that afternoon, it would have been attacking David instead of the fish, so that both the man and his fishing partner represent a disquieting potential for violence: "Breasley bent and wagged a finger over the dog's head, he was to save his teeth for thieves; David was glad he had chanced to arrive when the animal was off the premises" (*ET*, 27)—a fleeting thought that reinforces the parallel already evident between Williams and Breasley and the criminal intruder and the Peacock scholar, for David, though there by invitation, had had to enter the artist's estate like a thief, climbing over the gate (*ET*, 4). Somehow the fish had taken his place.

If Peter's gaze is drawn by snakes that swim out of sight (and by opportunities as if they were swimming snakes: "Peter, always eager to set things going, to bring things together . . . before the main chance disappeared, like a snake into a clump of yellow iris" [*ET*, 243]), Catherine's is drawn by fishermen, or at least by one in particular whose seriousness of purpose contrasts with Peter and the other picnickers' sense of play. Just after the teacup "transfer scene" in which Sally shows Tom the crayfish his father is looking for, and the creature threatens to leap out,

> [a] figure appears, from the trees, from the way they came: a fisherman, a peasant come fishing, in rubber boots and faded blues. . . . They stop looking for crayfish a second. . . . Perhaps simply because he is a serious fisherman, he has a function in the day. The frivolous ones turn back to their pursuit. Only Catherine watches the blue back till it finally disappears. . . . And leaves the water, as if he draws her after him. (*ET*, 246–47)

She leaves the group, wandering in search of her own secret place in the woods; later, her tranquillity will be broken by Peter, who will stumble across her supine body and sunglass-shaded eyes, having already stumbled across the snake.

What catches their eye, fisherman and fast-moving river wildlife, also catches ours, leads us on, either toward some main chance "to bring things together" or to some Undercliff, some forgotten margin of rough, wooded land between the cliff where farmland and meadow end and the water's edge, to a place where we are made to feel we have been before—for Catherine, because she feels as one who "lies, as in a novel by an author one no longer admires . . . as if one had done it before

one had" (*ET*, 278); for us, because we know one has, as Sarah Woodruff, who was similarly discovered, lying on her back in the grass, so well concealed one might not have seen her at all:

> She lay on her back. . . . Her body was almost hidden in the long early summer grass; so nearly hidden he might have missed her. (*ET*, 280)
>
> She had chosen the strangest position, a broad, sloping edge of grass some five feet beneath the level of the plateau, and which hid her from the view of any but one who came, as Charles had, to the very edge. (*FLW*, 61)

A certain perspective is required, and a willingness to go to the edge, to look beyond the boundary that limits a story to its own plot, in order to see that space, which for Fowles has a particular sense of place, where one comes across a character one recognizes in the way a ceramic expert tells a Ralph Wood, seeing in her a deeper past, a meaningful origin. Behind Catherine there is Sarah, and behind her another.

What could be found in *The Ebony Tower* in fragmentary form—separated, like the various parts of Tobias's fish, from an original unity—appears in *Daniel Martin* of a piece with the plot, seeming to guide it with the kind of "supernatural pattern" with which the title character from the beginning feels threatened (*DM*, 46). The fish that found its avatar in the weasel, and in the snake in water and the snake on land, surfaces again in the boyhood memory that suddenly comes to Daniel on the occasion of his discovery of a corpse in a river. What happens in the rest of the novel, in particular at its end, flows from the circumstances of that discovery, behind which lies the memory that itself almost seems a remembrance of what has gone before (in *The Ebony Tower*, in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*), with a sureness that hints that in this novel we are closer than we were before to the track of the Apocryphal journey.

The discovery itself functions as a memory in the story of the novel, one that will help the hero achieve a union with the woman who was with him that day, for it will remind him, decades later, that their coming together—the eventual marriage toward which this long novel tends—would in fact be a reunion. Daniel and Jane were already united by their discovery of the corpse, and more than that by the event that followed it and that it seemed to cause. That he and Jane should have been together at all that day was unusual. They were each part of another couple: Jane was Anthony's financée; Daniel's future wife was her sister Nell. All were college friends at Oxford. In a punt on the Cherwell River, the two were headed for a quiet spot among the reeds near the bank when their boat was halted by some soft obstruction. Daniel was in the back, with the pole; it was Jane who first looked over

the side. She suddenly turned back, horror-struck. Daniel steps forward, and sees

> [j]ust beneath the surface of the water, pushed down by the punt's nose, a naked human buttock, grayish-white. There is an opening in the reeds where the back and head must lie. The bottom of the legs are in the water, invisible beneath the punt. (*DM*, 23)

When he pushes the boat away, he can see "the hideous, obscure shape bob slowly to the surface" (*DM*, 23). They call for help; someone takes charge of recovering the body. It was a woman. Later, on the bank, their faces turned away from the horror in the water (flesh that looked like what it contained: "the gray buttocks like uncooked tripe" [*DM*, 54]), Daniel speaks to Jane of a hidden memory from childhood:

> "When I was a kid, helping with the harvest during the war, a rabbit got caught in the mower blades of the reaper." But he doesn't go on.
>
> She stares out over the river. "I know what you mean. Like things in dreams."
>
> "It's all I can remember about that day now. The whole summer." (*DM*, 26)

The reader of the novel will also remember that scene, which took place in the opening chapter. The rabbits' presence in the field of corn was signaled by "a stirring of ears, a ripple of shaken stems, like a troutwave in a stream"—this in a field marked by the name Fishacre (*DM*, 7). What makes Daniel Martin remember that incident now is that it was, like the discovery of the waterlogged corpse, an unexpected, perhaps illuminating, confrontation with death.

> The last swathe. Then a scream of pain, like a tiny child's, from the hidden blades. . . . A rabbit drags away, its hind legs sliced off. The boy who stooked runs and lifts it: the red stumps. (*DM*, 8)

The boy is Daniel, and the moment the narration changes from third to first person, the moment the boy becomes the man and the writer who tells his own story, is also the moment he repeats the gesture by which Tobias passed from youth to manhood, when he seized the fish and cut out its heart, liver, and gall.

> He sits with his back to a beech-trunk, staring down through foliage at the field. Without past or future, purged of tenses; collecting this day, pregnant with being. . . . Inscrutable innocent, already in exile. . . .
>
> I feel in his pocket and bring out a clasp-knife; plunge the blade in the red earth to clean it of the filth from the two rabbits' liver, intestines, stench. He stands and turns and begins to carve his initials on the beech-tree. . . . Adieu, my boyhood and my dream. (*DM*, 10)

The difference is that, though like Tobias he has begun a journey away from home, Daniel's exile will allow him to win the bride but not to

return to his father, and that for him it is the knife itself that he will have to learn to use, the instrument with which he begins a writing career grounded in the distance that has already begun to separate him from his past.

His first literary success, a play, *The Empty Church*, would be an attempt to cast off a dead father's influence, "to exorcise my father's ghost from my life" (*DM*, 140), a paternal presence associated with ever-open, ever-vigilant eyes: "His father had once unwittingly terrified him by insisting that Christ's eyes followed . . . wherever you went, whatever you did, they watched" (*DM*, 673). A clergyman, like the great-grandfather who stared down from the portrait on the dining room wall (*DM*, 80), Daniel's father buried not only the dead of his parish but also "any nakedness of feeling" (*DM*, 79). His father died in 1948 (*DM*, 87), Daniel's first year at Oxford; his ghost, not easily exorcised, seems to reappear in the person of a friend he meets that same year (*DM*, 69), through the kind of coincidence of dates that appears to recur in Fowles—the sentencing of Emile de la Roncière, the other "French lieutenant," took place "the very same day that Charles had come into the world" (*FLW*, 188); Conchis saw Henrik, the mad and blinded Norwegian ("And what eyes! . . . insane eyes. . . . I could also see the characteristic opacity of cataract" [*M*, 310–11]) whom his interest in birdwatching had led him to discover, meet his pillar of fire at the same hour and day that de Deukans's chateau (the man from whom Conchis had acquired a fascination for "ornithosemantics" [*M*, 183] and from whom he would inherit a fortune and a way of life) was consumed by flames (*M*, 316). The friend in whom Daniel saw his father was Anthony:

> He was a kind of father-substitute, though we were almost exactly the same age. The idea would have outraged me at the time, and killed the friendship, as I believed I had consciously "killed" the spirit of my father and his antiquated world. (*DM*, 71)

It is with the announcement of Anthony's own imminent death, more than two decades later, that the novel begins. Living in California, with "too many dead fish on his conscience" to write the novel that would redeem his talent from the waste of Hollywood script-writing (*DM*, 15) and in the company and embrace of the starlet Jenny McNeil (in whose name Daniel already possessed, proleptically, both "Janey" [*DM*, 59, e.g.] and "Nell"), Martin is called to the phone. Anthony, dying of cancer in an English hospital, has asked Jane and Nell to plead with Daniel to come speak with him before he dies. Daniel feels "strangely frightened," as if "threatened with supernatural pattern." His thoughts run to "traps, returns out of freedom, the digging up of corpses" (*DM*,

46). For him the return from the American West Coast is a retracing of his path of exile; he has been in transit nearly all his life, "homeless, permanently mid-Atlantic" (*DM*, 33), ever since that moment in the Fishacre field in Devon where, "inscrutable innocent, already in exile," he had eviscerated the rabbit and carved his signature with the knife. What Anthony will ask of him is that he open up a long-buried past, that he care for his widow by helping to "disinter the person Jane might have been from beneath the person she now is" (*DM*, 188), that he return to that afternoon on the river that ended with Jane and Daniel in bed—

> We got under the bed-clothes, and I possessed her, and I don't think it lasted very long. I remember those minutes far more for their profound and delicious wickedness, their betrayal, their impossibility-actuality, their inextricable association with the woman in the reeds. (*DM*, 94)

Anthony had long known about what happened that day; far from bearing a grudge, the dying man would be grateful if Daniel, long since divorced from Nell, would rekindle a friendship with Jane. As if Daniel's assent were all he needed to die in peace, Anthony accelerates the process of his death by rolling his wheelchair to the window once he was again alone in the room and pushing himself out over the edge to the street below.

That death slowly draws Daniel and Jane together, leading him to a contentment that his years of unserious affairs with younger women had never allowed him to find, giving her the opportunity to unite both love and passion, giving both the chance to begin again, to take the path they both should perhaps have taken, together, years ago. Their marriage of middle-aged love is projected beyond the last page of the novel, giving *Daniel Martin* the kind of conclusiveness that Fowles's novels had until now avoided.

Along the way to that happy ending, signs emerge that point to the common Apocryphal background that unites this journey with the less fortunate ones of Fowles's earlier heroes. Chief among them may be Anthony himself—or rather, his ghost:

> "I suppose it's that third person who's always with us. Between us."
> "Anthony?"
> "Our familiar compound ghost."
> "Which also joins us?"
> "As crossbeams join girders. Making sure they never touch."
> "But I am touched, Dan." (*DM*, 604)

This ghostly companion to Jane and Daniel's journey, accompanying them here on a voyage up yet another river, the Nile, an Anthony whose gratitude seems to last beyond the grave, guiding this distantly related

pair to a reunion that was predestined from the beginning, has, like the Toby that presided over Charles and Sarah's brief union, more than one origin. Anthony himself was first perceived as the ghost of Daniel's father; he is a compound ghost in that sense, but also in a way that allows Fowles to trace his genealogy to the poem that Nicholas Urfe found, as if by chance, on the beach in *The Magus*, and which served as the passage through which he entered Conchis's domain. The narrator makes it clear, four pages later in *Daniel Martin*, that the compound ghost is in some sense Eliot's (*DM*, 608); one could have first encountered it in "Little Gidding," where the poet

> . . . caught the sudden look of some dead master
> Whom I had known, forgotten, half recalled
> Both one and many; in the brown baked features
> The eyes of a familiar compound ghost
> Both intimate and unidentifiable.[20]

What Urfe found, later in the same place, are lines that, brought to mind again by this allusion in Fowles's last novel to date, serve to remind one that what has been taking place since his first novel is a journey, a repeated voyage whose end may be to know its beginning, an origin that can be traced back to another, earlier journey:

> We shall not cease from exploration
> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started
> And know the place for the first time.[21]

That earlier journey had an angel for a guide, which according to one student of the story was in fact a ghost: G. H. Gerould in his study of *The Grateful Dead*, a folk tale of which Tobit is the earliest example and whose basic plot is the story of how a young man is aided in his quest for a wife by the grateful ghost of a man whom he has charitably buried, argues that Raphael "is certainly a substitute for the ghost" of the corpse whose interment led to the father's blindness and the son's departure. Though no longer young, Daniel Martin is indeed assisted by the ghost of the man whose death he made easier, aided in his effort to marry Jane, whose distant kinship to him recalls the family tie that gave Tobias the right to demand Sarah's hand (Tobit 6:11).

Other details, smaller in scope than the events and relations that make it possible to see Tobias in Daniel, Sarah in Jane, the angel in Anthony, and the fish in the rabbit in Fishacre and the woman in the reeds, continue to point both the couple's way and our own along this ancient path: in their journey up the Nile, they meet an elderly Egyptologist (whose resemblance to the burglarized scholar in "Poor Koko"

has already been mentioned) who explains to them the meaning of the place through which they are passing, of "the river between," a moment somehow outside time where past and future are linked, or disappear (*DM*, 559). In speaking of his own life, he admits to a blindness, an inability to see what was really happening in the world that was caused by his absorption in a long-dead past, preserved in the tombs around them. What is striking in this fatherly figure is the small fact of his son's vocation:

> Jane asked him what his son still in Germany did.
> "He is a doctor. Like his mother and grandfather."
> "You must be proud of him."
> "Yes, he is a surgeon now. Of the eyes. I am told very good." (*DM*, 554)

And when Daniel and Jane continue their exploration of the ancient Middle East with an excursion into Syria, to the ruins of Palmyra, an eastward journey that if prolonged would have taken them to Nineveh, to the banks of the Tigris, and along the path Tobias had himself followed, they are finally brought together in the way they were once before, in the same bed, by the intervention of another small detail that first appeared in Tobit: once he had entered Sarah's room, Tobias "made a smoke" with the heart and liver of the fish and thereby scared off the evil demon that would have stood in the way of his sleeping with his bride, as it had for the unlucky seven who preceded him (Tobit 8:3). Although Daniel and Jane have been traveling together for some time, and despite long conversations and a shared memory, he has been unable to persuade her to share his bed. When they returned that night in Palmyra to their separate hotel rooms and she opened her door, the smell of the paraffin stove was overpowering. "He drew a breath, then squatted beside the ancient stove and turned a tap on a fuel-pipe. It was wet with leaked paraffin. Another clogged wheel: the flame shone white a moment, then began to phut and smoke" (*DM*, 638). In trying to adjust the flame, he has only made it worse, adding smoke to the stench of the paraffin. What his earlier proposition could not accomplish ("Jane, why don't we behave like two normal human beings and make it one room tonight?" [*DM*, 634]), the smoke does:

> "Any warmth. In a wasteland."
> She stayed, as if already frozen; but then the gloved fingers clenched against his.
> "I'll come in a minute." (*DM*, 638)

That she should finally sleep with him only because of the smoke that he inadvertently caused to fill her room, and that the old man who

accompanied them on their Nile journey should have a son who practiced Tobias's craft, make it nearly seem that only by evoking in even the smallest details of his narrative the older story can Fowles bring his novel and his hero to a harmonic resolution. That harmony arises not only from the reconciliation with himself that the marriage implies, the resolution of the tension between Daniel Martin and his life style of the past two decades, but, in a larger context, from the fact that though they pursued their journeys in different places and at different times Charles Smithson and Daniel Martin, together with certain main and supporting characters in *The Ebony Tower*, were acting in harmony both with each other and the original, the theme of which they give every appearance of being variations. It is appropriate that it should be while listening to a performance of the Goldberg Variations that Daniel would find the resolve to ask Jane to marry him: "It was less that the music particularly moved him, he had never really enjoyed Bach," but rather that he became aware as he heard it played that night, listening with Jane on the terrace, of "an identity, a syncretism, a same key" (and, somehow, of "that shadow of the other shared voyage") (*DM*, 600): he was responding to the near-hypnotic effect of Bach's thirty variations, of their strange ability to be variations on a theme whose melody they never repeat, stretching to the limit the idea of sameness in diversity. What they had in common, with each other and with the theme, was their harmonic progression, "a same key"—though the one variation that moved him most, appearing to Daniel to be "symbolic of things he had buried" (*DM*, 601), a very slow one toward the end that seemed "to hesitate . . . on the brink of silence," evidently the twenty-fifth (Miranda Grey had also felt its power: *C*, 176), was even more distant from the theme, disguising its origins still further by changing the key from G major to minor (as do only two others), though still preserving the harmonic progression, that sequence of chords that might be thought of as itself a melody, more basic than the changeable upper line, the ground upon which the thirty figures dance. It was therefore at the moment that the source was most buried that Daniel was most aware of what he had kept underground. The reader of Fowles's last three works of fiction might well undergo a similar experience, feeling despite the diversity of story line a unity that makes one suspect one has never really left the place where one began, that the river of his prose is, like "the river between," a place where the past is still now and an ancient and Apocryphal fish still present.

1. John Fowles, *The Ebony Tower*. Fowles's other novels are indicated by the following acronyms: *C=The Collector; M=The Magus, A Revised Version; FLW=The French Lieutenant's Woman; DM=Daniel Martin.*

2. *The Oxford English Dictionary.*

3. L. A. and H. B. Boger, eds., *The Dictionary of Antiques and the Decorative Arts,* articles "Toby Jug" and "Wood, Ralph."

4. A. Wikgren, in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (4:658–62), notes its "wide appeal"; recognized as canonical by the Council of Trent in 1546, it was regularly printed in English Bibles until 1629. G. H. Gerould, in his study of the related folk tale *The Grateful Dead* (pp. 46–47), says of Tobit that it "has been, perhaps, the best-loved story in the Apocrypha." J. C. Dancy, in *The Shorter Books of the Apocrypha* (p. 14), points out that the names of father and son are the same, Tobit being "a rarer contracted form of Tobias."

5. A name that is given to only one other woman in the Bible, Abraham's wife (*Interpreter's Dictionary*, 4:219–20).

6. Robert M. Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, p. 305.

7. Barry Olshen, in his *John Fowles*, (p. 99), reports that he is "one of Fowles's favorite nineteenth-century writers."

8. "Skillful Angler," p. 52.

9. *Economist*, 30 Nov. 1974, Autumn Books section, p. 10.

10. Olshen, p. 93.

11. Olshen actually includes all of Fowles's novels with the stories in his invocation of knightly ordeals and faith-keeping, and there is some mesure in which what he says may be true in this broader sense.

12. "*Eliduc* Revisited."

13. Karl Geiringer, *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Culmination of an Era,* pp. 296–97. See also Douglas R. Hofstadter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid,* p. 392.

14. Indeed, Fowles more or less abandons responsibility for whatever echoes of *Eliduc* may lurk in the stories, even in the first, in an interview with John F. Baker: "The realization that the 'Ebony Tower' stories were variations on a theme only came to Fowles after they were written, he says—and he is amused by the detective work some critics have put in trying to find the links between them. 'It wasn't until I'd finished the title story that I was struck by the echoes of the old French tale of Eliduc, and I wrote that in, and the incident of killing the weasel on the road, afterward.' "

15. Eric Blom, " 'Enigma' Variations." Though Elgar said the hidden theme was one with which everyone would be familiar, it remains unknown.

16. In the original as well: lines 894 and 1002, *Les Lais de Marie de France,* pp. 182, 186.

17. *The New English Bible: The Apocrypha.*

18. *Les Lais de Marie de France* p. 288 (my translation).

19. It also looked like a mouse, an animal that has its own recurrence in the book, for different reasons.

20. *Four Quartets*, in T. S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909–1950*, p. 140.

21. Eliot, p. 145.

22. Gerould, *The Grateful Dead,* p. 46.

2

The World According to T. S.

"His private randiness became a popular story."—WAG[1]

Conceived in a hospital room between a man with lidless, sightless open eyes and one from whom certain internal organs had been removed, T. S. Garp came close to having no father at all. Technical Sergeant Garp, himself an orphan, had been reduced to idiocy by a war wound when nurse Jenny Fields, who had long wanted a child without the encumberment of a husband, found him in her care. It would be an "almost virgin birth" (*WAG*, 12). The elder Garp had been left with little more than his name when, having taken his predecessor Fowler's coveted place as ball turret gunner in a B-17, his skull was pierced by antiaircraft flak somewhere near Rouen. He hardly owned even that, for he constantly repeated *Garp* more in imitation of the first voice he heard after the shrapnel lobotomy than from any memory of who he was. And he began to lose that, too, in his final decline: the *G* disappearing, and later the *p*, so that when Jenny Fields entered his room and drew around them the "white shroud" of the bed curtain, undressed, pulled back the sheet, and mounted him, the penultimate *r* vanished, leaving only a primal vowel. In the little time that remained of his existence, he degenerated into a sexless pre-infancy, his dreams striking Jenny "as the dreams a fish might have" (*WAG*, 21–22).

The hero of John Irving's *The World According to Garp*, young T. S., will not feel the need to ask his mother for more information about his father than the fact that he had been a soldier, the only detail he

possessed of his prehistory, until the moment of his sexual initiation, with Cushie at the cannons that overlook the Steering River. The cannon balls were greenish and rusted, "as if they belonged to a vessel long undersea"; the cannons themselves bore inscriptions that testified to the popularity of the spot among the students of the academy where T. S. Garp spent his childhood: "M. Overton, '59, shot his wad here" (*WAG*, 70). That particular graffito may have been written in remembrance of more than one loss, for in this novel inhabited by texts as well as characters—the protagonist is a writer, and three of his stories are embedded in the narrative—and in which art has, bizarrely, predicted life (Garp's new novel is an astounding popular success, thanks to the opportunism of his editor John Wolf, who expresses the hope that the renown of *The World According to Bensenhaver* will be "big enough to make people go back and read the first two novels" [*WAG*, 329]), ghosts from other regions of Irving's world sometimes intrude. Readers of *Garp* who do go back and read *Setting Free the Bears* (1968), *The Water-Method Man* (1972), and *The 158-Pound Marriage* (1974) will recognize Vienna and the bears. They might also recognize in "M. Overton, '59 . . . " a hidden memorial to a certain M. Overturf, who perished while sighting down the cannon barrel of a tank that had long been underwater:

> It took him a long time to swim out to the exact place in the Danube where he could see the underwater tank. Treading water . . . he saw the tank's barrel swing up to where he thought he could almost touch it. . . . Then the tank's top hatch opened, or seemed to, or at least fluttered in the water. Who is down the tank's hatch? Wouldn't somebody be interested to know they were there? (*WMM*, 255)

T. S., seated with Cushie on the slope of the riverbank with the cannons behind them, looked up into the mouth of the nearest one "and was startled to see the head of a smashed doll, one glassy eye on him" (*WAG*, 70). And it is in the mouth of another that Cushie has to point out to him what it is he forgot to bring: "The cannon was crammed with old condoms" left there by the boys of Steering Academy. Much later in the novel, Garp will remember this as "his first condom shock," the beginning of a long haunting; all his life he would be "stalked by condoms," found in the most unlikely places: "in the back seat of the taxi, like the removed eye of a large fish"; once on the stick-shift of his Volvo, left there by someone who had borrowed the car overnight (*WAG*, 397–98). It is because of something he remembers about his own eyes that T. S. Garp, in the bushes with Cushie between the cannons and the river, is reminded of his father, the airborne gunner. Across the river, choked and dying from silt, two golfers are perilously making

their way through the muck. One is pursuing his ball; the other, more cautious, aware of the danger, turns out to be Cushie's father, Fat Stew. The mud flats around the floundering golfer make an ominous sound, "as if beneath the mud some mouth was gasping to suck him in" (*WAG*, 73). Cushie decides to handle Garp's erection in a nonreproductive way, saying she doesn't want "a *Jap* baby"—T. S. is puzzled, but the word does jolt his memory. He watches the golfers retreat from the ball-swallowing river; it "may have been then that Garp remembered Fat Stew saying he had Jap eyes, and a view of his personal history clicked into perspective." When T. S. was five, the Steering family dog bit off most of his ear; examining him, Fat Stew looked less at his ear than his eyes, for, like everyone else in the Steering academic community, he wondered who Garp's father could have been. Peering into these apparent indices of paternity, he pronounced Garp Japanese (*WAG*, 45). It was "at this moment," recalling the childhood incident, that "Garp resolved to ask his mother" who indeed his father had been (*WAG*, 73).

Apart from his name, eyes are for T. S. Garp the only remaining trace of his father. Though subject to misinterpretation (the eyes of a soldier—but for which side? Was Garp's father, like the Nazi buried in the tank in the Danube, one of the enemy?), they will continue to bring together, in one instance disastrously, father and son. The prophylactics that Garp says haunt him become at a certain critical moment eyes: the rubber on the stick-shift and the one in the back seat that resembled the extracted eye of a fish reenact the most important scene in the novel, the car accident in which Garp's son's eye is removed by that same pointed shaft. The train of events that leads to that transmission of blindness from father to son—prefigured in the broken doll's single staring eye in the cannon's mouth, as well as in the blinded patient who "had no eyelids, so it appeared he was always watching" (*WAG*, 21) and whose blasphemous invocation of Father and Son accompanied Garp's conception—begins the moment the novel's scene setting ends and its action begins.

T. S. Garp, now the author of two novels (which clearly allude to two of the three novels John Irving published before *Garp*: *Procrastination*, recounted on pages 137–38 of *Garp*, is a variation on the Viennese zoo story of *Setting Free the Bears; Second Wind of the Cuckold* finds its title in the last sentence of *The 158-Pound Marriage* ["If cuckolds catch a second wind, I am eagerly waiting for mine" (*158PM*, 255)]), is in reality in a writing slump. For more than a year since the publication of his second novel, he has been unable to write. "In fact, it

seemed to Garp now that he was too full of his own lucky life (with Helen and their children)" (*WAG*, 170). His own experience was too ordinary to write about, and his powers of imagination were too weak for him to write about anything else. Helen seemed the perfect wife; they had grown up together at Steering Academy, where T. S.'s mother was the resident nurse and Helen's father coached the wrestling team. If Cushie Steering introduced T. S. to sex, it was Helen who first fired his writer's imagination. Garp had been slaying frogs, spearing them with the other javelin throwers in the upper reaches of the Steering River, when he saw Helen reading a book on the top row of the stadium. "'Killed enough little animals for today?' Helen asked him. 'Hunting something else?'" (*WAG*, 62). They talked about the idea of becoming a writer; Helen denied an interest, but agreed with Garp's prediction that she might marry one some day. Her gray sweat suit hid her figure: "Garp wrote later that he first discovered he had an imagination while trying to imagine Helen Holm's body. . . . It was that afternoon in the empty stadium, with frog gore on the point of his javelin, when Helen Holm provoked his imagination and T. S. Garp decided he was going to be a writer" (*WAG*, 63). The first story he would bring her to read would mix fatherhood, lovers, and graves (*WAG*, 65).

They now have two sons; Helen has a tenured position in English, and Garp does the cooking. T. S. is reading the telephone directory, looking for names; it was there that he found the names of the characters in his books, and when his writing was not going well, "he read the phone book for more names; he revised the names of his characters over and over again" (*WAG*, 173). His older son, returning from school, breaks in on his meditation to ask if he can spend the night at Ralph's. Garp's paternal instincts, or anxiety, make him want to refuse. T. S. has little faith in the competence of "Mrs. Ralph," whose real name "he could never remember." He lets Duncan go, but later that evening he feels compelled to go check on his son. Wearing only his running shorts, he hurries out of the house after midnight, hoping to rescue him "from the randy Mrs. Ralph" (*WAG*, 200). Though Duncan, asleep with Ralph in the faint glow of the living room TV, is in no real danger, Garp is. He explains his mission to Ralph's mother, who, drunk and half undressed, asks him upstairs to get rid of a young man who will not be given a name until later in the novel (he will turn up again after the automobile accident: "'If I'd known you were the author of those books,' the kid said, 'I would never have been so disrespectful.' His name was Randy and he had become an ardent Garp fan" [*WAG*, 275]). Garp throws him out but perilously delays his own departure in an attempt to bolster the woman's confidence, an effort that backfires

when he clumsily addresses her as "Mrs. Ralph" (*WAG*, 206). Helen's suspicions are powerfully aroused, and nothing T. S. can say when he returns home does anything to allay them. Duncan recites the plot of a long TV movie he had watched with Ralph; "Garp suspected that it was actually two movies, and Duncan had fallen asleep before one was over and woken up after the other one had begun. He tried to imagine where and when Mrs. Ralph's activities fitted into Duncan's movies" (*WAG*, 214).

How the name of Ralph, which in this instance stands for a name that is always somehow forgotten, fits into two stories that, though separate, are similar enough that one could fall asleep in one and wake up in the next and still feel at home, is a puzzle the reader who, like Randy, has read the author's previous works ("The boy turned out to have read Garp's novels while he was in jail" [*WAG*, 275]) might want to think about. The two stories are *Garp* and the one novel of Irving's earlier three to which Garp does not allude, *The Water-Method Man.* Mrs. Ralph, who will not be given her real name of Florence Cochran Bowlsby until the epilogue in the last chapter (*WAG*, 421), plays in Garp's life a role that can best be described as catastrophic, particularly in the sense Roland Barthes gives it when he writes of the outsider in Pasolini's *Teorema* that he "does not speak, but . . . inscribes something within each of those who desire him—he performs what the mathematicians call a catastrophe (the disturbance of one system by another): it is true that this mute figure is an angel."[2] A certain Ralph Packer plays as central a part in *The Water-Method Man* as Mrs. Ralph does in *Garp*, and for a writer whose writer hero considers and revises his characters' names as carefully as does T. S. Garp, finding in them at times a stimulus to creation, that John Irving should have assigned the same name to Packer and Bowlsby, especially when for the latter he had to stretch it, may make the effort to see just how these two namesakes are and are not alike worthwhile. Mrs. Ralph wreaks havoc in Garp's life, for the consequences of Helen's mistrust will be enormous. But like the angel of which Barthes speaks, she does give T. S. what he desires, "inscribing" in him the experience that he had complained his creative imagination lacked. What results from his delay in coming home, even though his seduction never occurs (*WAG*, 421), will become the material out of which a third novel will be written (*The World According to Bensenhaver*), one whose extraordinary fortune strangely foretells that of the book in which it appears and whose name it evokes.

The writer-hero in *The Water-Method Man,* Fred "Bogus" Trumper, is not as happily married as T. S. Garp. Whereas Garp remains, at the end of his story, with Helen, Trumper leaves his wife and son in Iowa

City to cross the Atlantic in search of a certain Merrill Overturf, who it turns out was already dead, then returns to New York, where Ralph Packer takes him in and gives him the means to put his life back together. Packer's intervention is as helpful as Mrs. Ralph's is calamitous, but both intervene in the manner of Barthes's angel, coming out of the blue to rescue Irving's protagonists from discontent, marital or creative, giving them the chance to see their world as it really is.

Ralph Packer first appears to Trumper as an apparition from his doctoral thesis. Bogus is writing a translation of an Old Low Norse epic for a degree in comparative literature, at times inserting fictional material of his own when the original text is obscure, additions that no one will be in a position to detect. He is also working in the university's language lab, editing tapes for classes in German.

> I felt myself confronted by Akthelt's father, Old Thak. . . . "You Trumper?" he said. A wise man, I thought, would confess it all now. Admit the translation was a fraud. Hope Old Thak goes back to the grave. (*WMM*, 39)

The ghost of the father will fade, but another figure, this time from the Apocryphal story whose outlines were visible in Fowles, will take its place, that of the angel whose name was similarly anagrammatized in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, and who knew what to do with the entrails of fish. Ralph has come to offer to train Trumper in the art of cinematic soundtracking: matching tape to film, one kind of reel to another, following the cineast's creative trail but adding something of one's own ingenuity—supplying music, offstage noise, narration, "jamming voices, jumbling time" (*WMM*, 39). It is not necessarily remunerative: " 'What do you pay?' I asked, and he whomped his arctic mitten down on my tape stack, sending one reel flopping like a stunned fish" (*WMM*, 40). This power to transform reels into fish ought not to be taken lightly, given the strong undercurrent of their presence in the novel. Trumper is surrounded by them when he is in bed with Tulpen, the woman to whom Ralph introduces him when he starts working with the filmmaker in New York and with whom he continues to live, except for one brief episode, through the end of the novel. "Her bed is framed on three sides by bookcases, waist-high; we are walled in by words. And all along the tops of these cases, in a watery U around us, these gurgling aquariums sit." They are kept lit all night with neon, so that "the aura round the bed takes getting used to. In a half-sleep you actually *feel* underwater" (*WMM*, 62).

Though the title of the novel does not refer to this kind of water (but rather to the treatment for a urinary infection that his father, a urologist, could not cure), Trumper's imagination inhabits that element. "Vari-

ations on a water theme" was how he described his two most frequent nightmares. One was about Merrill Overturf trying to open the top hatch of the tank in the Danube, the watery tomb of the unknown enemy soldier; "it always took him too long." The other was always about his son, Colm, "in some imagined disaster which always involved deep water, the sea or cold mudflats"—of which *Garp* 's Steering River will provide a special, and privileged, example. "As always, it was too terrible to allow him to consciously remember the details" (*WMM*, 368). Such in fact is the feeling that reading Irving's corpus can induce: as if there were behind all its fish, eyes, fathers, and graves some dream too terrible or too deeply rooted to emerge completely from the unconscious. That that dream has appeared before, with the same peculiar constellation of images, in the Book of Tobit, can be demonstrated; to do so is to run the risk of making explicit that about which the author is silent—though not the text: names, which according to Trumper "are facts" (*WMM*, 16), can speak in Irving's fiction as they did in Fowles's; and they are, strangely, the same names. Garp's problematic initials remain resolutely devoid of meaning until he becomes "Tillie Sarah" (*WAG*, 363) on the occasion of his mother's funeral (assuming a female identity in order to infiltrate a memorial service open only to women), so that his name, androgynous in its two versions, is doubly evocative: the heroine, in his apocryphal middle name; the hero, hidden in the gap between T and S. Garp runs alongside Mrs. Ralph in her car when they first meet (*WAG*, 182: before the events of the night at her house, Garp had caught up with her car as was his custom with all speedsters on his neighborhood's streets), and Trumper meticulously follows the path of Ralph's film reels with his sound-tracking, while Tobias found a traveling companion for his journey in a Raphael. "Like any name, there were vague reasons," as Trumper says (*WMM*, 16); among them, it appears, is an anagram that underlines the similarity of Raphael, Ralph, and Mrs. Ralph: fellow-travelers for Tobias, Trumper, and T. S. Garp, intervening in their lives when they lack direction, providing guidance, instruction, or a spur to action. The guidance they provide is not limited to the protagonists: the angel's advice to seize the fish that leaps out at you and examine it closely, breaking it apart if necessary to find what applications it may have, is itself applicable to the reading of a text like Irving's in which fish tend to leap out at the reader (like the hero himself, who, trying to follow Merrill Overturf's skiing instruction, picks up too much speed and is launched up and over a parking lot, descending toward the gaping open trunk of a Mercedes, "a great whale's maw waiting for the flying fish to fall" [*WMM*, 99]). It is one way to describe the analysis pursued here; it

is also a way to understand the detail of the flopping fish in the scene where Ralph Packer first appears: the film that Trumper will match his tape to will be the story of his own life, Packer's documentary of a failed marriage (the marriage Trumper left behind in Iowa City), and of a life that lacks direction, plan, or plot (*WMM*, 93). The plot of the novel turns upon Trumper's beginning to find some direction for his life from the experience of sound-tracking the film. The reel that Ralph's mitten figuratively transforms into a fish becomes under the author's hand the tape that Trumper will add to the film, if the simile holds.

It does, if one pays serious attention to the use Irving makes of fish imagery, particularly to the way he weaves it into Trumper's decision to accept Ralph's proposal that the next film they make together (after several on which Trumper begins his apprenticeship) be about Trumper's own life. Irving's hero is in bed with Tulpen, surrounded by the watery U of her aquariums. His eye is caught by

> a tiny, translucent, turquoise eel, its inner organs visible and somehow functioning. One organ looked like a little plumber's helper; it plunged down, sucked up, and the eel's mouth opened to belch a tiny bubble. . . . A form of speech? Trumper wondered. Was a bubble a word or a whole sentence? Perhaps a paragraph! (*WMM*, 90)

Trumper sees the talking eel as a poet speaking soundless words, "reading beautifully to his world." What was he saying? To crack the code, one would have to figure out how the eel's bits of air fit together, whether as words or sentences or something larger. This process of analyzing and translating a purely visual discourse into sounds and spoken words is not unlike what Trumper does in the film lab with the reels of film to which he will add a reel of sound. It is in both cases a question of making the implicit explicit, of supplying words for what is not yet said.

Without doing any more than looking, Trumper is able to contemplate what Tobias had to catch and cut open his fish to find, its internal organs. The fish's heart, liver, and gall spoke to Tobias's own situation, to his relationship with both his father and his future wife; Trumper does not yet know what the fish can say to him, but he is aware of the possibility of a message. For the reader to hear it as well, he should look at the transparent fish as intently as Irving's hero does. The peculiar description of the inner organ of speech might trigger a recollection, for someone who like Mrs. Ralph's randy lover has read all his novels, of a passage in The *The 158-Pound Marriage* (known to Randy as *Second Wind of the Cuckold*) that brings together a plumber's helper, fish, fish innards, and obscured vision, all elements (except for the plunger) of the Tobias story:

> I have tried to visualize them as young lovers, and, of course, Edith has told me a lot about their romance, but Winter's car eludes me. A 1954 Zorn-Witwer? Edith said the gearshift slid in and out of the dashboard like a plumber's helper. I've never heard of such a thing. (*158PM*, 136–37)

What happens in cars (and with gearshifts) is of considerable importance in Irving's world, as we will see in *Garp*; here, the couple are driving one through Greece. From their hotel room Edith could lie in bed in the early morning and listen to the sounds of the fish market below. On the same page where the gearshift is described in the same terms as the communicative inner organ of Trumper's eel, Edith hears without seeing the hacking and slitting of fish knives, and notes that the "suction sound of removing the innards seemed magnified" (*158PM*, 137). It might also seem magnified for the reader, who has just seen the plumber's helper of the Zorn-Witwer. Edith descends, in her imagination, for a closer look; on the next page the narrator reproduces her first short story: The fishmongers had packed up and gone before her protagonist came down from the hotel room, but the cobblestones were still "wet with fish-blood and slime, phosphorescent with scales, flecked blue with intestines." It ought to be hosed down, someone says, before potential guests of the hotel arrive and suppose that these are the remains of a suicide, or perhaps the residue of "the ritual slaying of a wronged lover caught and ripped apart at the scene of this indiscretion" (*158PM*, 138). This instance of mistaking fish for lust finds its counterpart in the scene in *The Water-Method Man* that we have just left: Trumper loses track of the transparent fish and gets out of bed for a closer look into the tank. He is also listening, somewhat distractedly, to Tulpen, and can see her through the aquarium.

> A fish darted down her cleavage, algae moved in her lap. . . . Looking at him staring through a fish tank, she snatched the sheet around herself angrily. "Stop looking at my crotch when I'm trying to talk to you!" . . . He was genuinely surprised; he'd just been looking for the eel. (*WMM*, 93)

Edith's short story sets up its own counterpart to the hotel guests' mistake: her narrator-protagonist contrasts the wronged lover's imagined "indiscretion" to her own desire for privacy in the story's next sentence, "I was discreet myself and made him drive me into the country." But once on the road, in what one easily imagines to be the same Zorn-Witwer, her lack of modesty gets her in trouble. With the sun glaring down through the "old-fashioned, unslanted, glass windshield, which magnified everything a little" (if one is keeping track of how elements in the framing story [the narrator's recollection of what Edith

told him about her romance with Severin Winter, itself located in the account of a car trip with Severin, Edith, and the narrator's own wife] get translated into Edith's short story—the fish market, the Zorn-Witwer—then one will be aware of the windshield's having something to do with the evisceration of fish, whose "suction sound" underwent a similar magnification), she unbuttoned her blouse and rolled it up in a knot under her small, firm breasts. She and her lover had to slow down for a large truck full of watermelons, in the back of which a teenage boy sat, now enjoying the view (magnified, it seems, by the windshield). When they pulled out to pass, he lifted one of the melons over his head in a threatening gesture, so that for thirty-four kilometers they were stuck behind the truck and the wildly grinning Greek. Just before a widening of the road to four lanes would have allowed them to pass,

> the boy fell moaning on his back on the watermelon pile and lay writhing among the green globes until he ejaculated into the air. His stuff struck our rigid windshield like bird-dribble, a thick *whap*! against the glass on the passenger side. (*158PM*, 140)

Unlike the wetness on the cobblestones where the fish market had been, this residue is indeed the result of lust. Edith's story not only transposes elements of its own beginning into the principal scene of its plot but it hints at another, earlier origin: the biblical story of how a father's eyes were obscured by a white film of bird-dribble. That hint is not fully realized until one returns to the outer frame of the story, the other trip in the car, the one during which the narrator of the novel remembers Edith and Severin's trip through Greece. He moves to the front seat, next to Severin, who starts to talk to him about a recurring nightmare. In the dream, which "was not entirely fiction," Severin is stuck behind the watermelon truck and prevented from passing by the masturbating boy, who is befouling the windshield as he did before. When the dreamer decides to pull out anyway in spite of the threat

> the watermelons the boy held over the passing car would suddenly become Severin's children, and—too late to meekly fall back in the lane behind the truck—Severin Winter would see his children hurled down on him and splattered against the windshield. (*158PM*, 143)

It is a father's nightmare, and fathers' worried dreams recur in Irving—in Trumper's, one recalls, his son is always in some deep-water disaster whose details he can never quite remember.

Edith's story, and Irving's use of it in the context of Severin's recurring dream, offer an intriguing variation on Tobit's bizarre connection between bird droppings and a father's blindness. It is almost as if

Irving's text were an attempt to puzzle out the meaning of that odd detail, and its relation to the other elements of the Tobias story—fish, inner organs, corpses, finding a wife. The white bird-dribble in Edith's story unites father and son, for when their car does manage to get around the truck, she discovers that the driver, "an old man with the same shocking face as the boy's," is masturbating as well,

> grinning obscenely at me, twisting in the driver's seat, trying to raise his lap to window level to show me *his*!
> "Like father, like son," I said. (*158PM*, 140)

This short story, Edith's first literary work, links the damp residue of disemboweled fish to the droppings of birds, both associated with uncontrollable desire. The combination of fish with fowl will continue to characterize her work, in the narrator's eyes. Severin will later lead him upstairs to peer through the keyhole at Edith writing. She seemed poised above the typewriter "with the perfect concentration of a seagull suspended over water—over its food, its whole life source" (*158PM*, 246)—as if the novelist's meat were fish. For the novelist Irving, this seems to be true, with the added nuance that the fish on which he feeds is in some measure himself. They return to the kitchen, where "a long, thin knife spangled with fish scales" had shone in the sunlight (until, seeing the narrator staring at it, Severin had picked it up and plunged it into the dishwater [*158PM*, 244–45]), and where Severin tells him that she has just sold her first novel. "He might as well have slapped me with the cutting board, stunned me like a fish and slit me open."

The fish Trumper had been looking at has disappeared. What Tulpen is trying to tell him, while his attention is diverted by his search for that transparent talking eel, lost somewhere in the liquid U of the aquariums that frame her bed, is not only that Ralph Packer would like to make a film about Trumper's failed marriage and present life, and not only that she thinks it would be a good idea, but that she is willing to give him the opportunity to be a father again, to have a child that could take the place of the son he lost when he left his wife in Iowa City. Three events happen at the same time: the discovery and loss of the transparent fish (which will in fact never return to view, having been eaten by some other fish in the tank), the decision to work with Ralph on the sound track of the film about himself (for he will agree, reluctantly, to do it), and the offer of a new fatherhood. Trumper is not so sure about the last one. It presupposes, of course, a commitment to Tulpen he has not yet made; but paternity brings other problems as well, of which perhaps the most significant is that to become a father is to have to stare death in the face.

> Children [give] you a sudden sense of your own mortality. . . . I don't think it [is] just responsibility; it's just that children give you a sense of time. It was as if I'd never realized how time moved before. (*WMM*, 157)

The way Trumper's son makes him look at death, almost as if he had to teach him what it was, brings again into focus the association of birds with fish, particularly in the development this combination, which will expand to include fatherhood and mortality, is to undergo in the novel. "That November I held Colm's hand and watched the lowering V in the sky," a tired flock of wild ducks flying over Iowa City. They descended toward the duck pond, all but one; he hesitated, then dropped and struck the pond like a stone. His head was beneath the water, only his tail protruded.

> "Is he dead?" Colm asked.
> "No, no," I said. "He's just fishing. . . . "
> Colm was unconvinced. "He's dead. . . . Some ducks just die. . . . Animals and birds and people," he said. "They just get old and die." And he looked at me with worldly sympathy, obviously feeling sad to be stunning his father with such a hard truth. (*WMM*, 159–61)

The V of the ducks' formation, which reminds us of the U of Tulpen's aquariums, through whose transparency Trumper was wrongly accused of staring at her crotch, returns a few pages later in the view between Lydia Kindle's legs, a "brief V of flowers, baby-pink and baby-blue" (*WMM*, 178). Trumper, upset by his inability to confront his father with a demand for funds, had spent the night in the graduate library, where he considered a suicidal leap into the parking lot. Young Miss Kindle, a student, rescued him the next morning, inviting him into her "sea-green and arklike Edsel" for a drive in the country. It begins well but ends with Lydia locking him out of the car and driving away in acute embarrassment. Nude, he chases after her unshod across rough ground, thinking to cut her off by racing across a frozen pond, whose surface gives way and causes him to crash into an underwater fence. He doesn't catch up with her car, but he does almost run into a pair of hunters in a pickup, one of whom is busy cleaning a duck on the hood. They take him into town and offer the consolation of one of their half-plucked, eviscerated birds. Ralph Packer, who was providentially bicycling by, brings him the rest of the way home, where an uncomprehending wife awaits. Colm gets momentary possession of the duck.

Trumper's weak attempt to describe his outing as a hunting expedition is unconvincing, despite the feathers on his mustache (from the duck-cleaning in the truck) and the bird in his hand. Like the white mess on Severin and Edith's windshield, it is really the result of lust.

The duck is passed, momentarily, from father to son ("Colm toddled down the hall and sat next to this oddly feathered surprise. *May he remember me as the father with fancy presents of all kinds*" [*WMM*, 190].), and later from son to father: this wild duck episode is the event that impels Trumper to flee. He pays his mounting debts with a check from his father—his wife had written to demand what Trumper was afraid to request—and the last account he settles is the paternal one: he searches for the decaying duck in the trash, wraps it in plastic, places it in a sturdy box, and mails it to his father, with the accompanying note "Dear Sir: Please count your change" (*WMM*, 211).

This exchange presages others, toward the other end of Trumper's long journey to self-knowledge, a journey that begins here with this flight from family ties; that takes him to Vienna in search of Merrill Overturf, who succumbed to the lure of the submerged tomb in the Danube; then to Ralph Packer, who teaches him the use of reels and introduces him to Tulpen; and finally to the kind of contentment with which the novel concludes, both Trumper and his wife rematched with other, more suitable mates, Trumper still able to stand at the water's edge and tell his son the story of the great white whale, a borrowed tale that becomes the ultimate substitution for a father:

> "Is Moby Dick still alive?" Colm asked.
>
> Trumper thought, Well, why not? I can't provide the kid with God or a reliable father, and if there's something worth believing in, it ought to be as big as a whale. (*WMM*, 345)

But before all that happened, while Trumper was still en route, the duck that went from father to son and then, by parcel post, from son to father, seems to have turned into a fish: when Colm first came to visit his father in New York, he was fascinated by the inhabitants of Tulpen's aquariums; but the fish he chose to take home died, thanks to his father's insisting on driving him back to his mother instead of allowing Colm to fly by himself. Trumper's obsessive father's concern, which Garp will share, seems to have gotten in the way:

> By now he had the fishbowl unwrapped. . . . But the fish was floating on the top of the water.
>
> "Oh, it's lovely," Biggie said.
>
> "It's dead," said Colm, but he didn't seem very surprised. . . . "I wish I could have taken the plane back," he complained. "It doesn't take so long on the plane, and maybe the fish wouldn't have died." (*WMM*, 205–6)

Colm's lack of surprise here recalls his matter-of-fact attitude toward the downed duck, who was not fishing, as his father insisted, but dead. Trumper will try again to get a fish safely to his son, and this time

succeed—and the manner of his success says a great deal about the nature, and perhaps the origin, of the images whose recurrence in Irving's fiction has been at issue here.

Trumper's story is that of a son who slowly, reluctantly assumes the roles of husband and father. Though he was able to escape his marriage in Iowa City, paternity catches up with him in his relationship with Tulpen, who at first asks him if he would like a child by her and then goes ahead and has it on her own. It is a boy, and she names it Merrill, after Trumper's friend in Vienna who drowned while investigating the underwater tank. As the duck that gets given twice reminds us, Trumper is both father and son, a double identity that *The Water-Method Man* translates, faithful to its Apocryphal allusion, as a union of the salient attributes of the father and the son in that story: the bird that blinded Tobit and the fish Tobias caught. Consider, for example, the final fish in the novel, Trumper's version of Melville's whale:

> "Then Ishmael noticed there was something *funny* about this whale."
> "It was white!" Colm said.
> "Right," said Trumper. "And it had things stuck onto it everywhere . . ."
> "Harpoons!"
> "Barnacles and seaweed and birds!" said Trumper.
> "*Birds?*" said Colm.
> "Never mind." (*WMM*, 340–41)

What is Trumper thinking of? Perhaps his dissertation, which he finishes at this time, tying together the loose ends of his life. In it the hero's father, Old Thak, who was briefly roused from his grave when Ralph Packer first appeared, is slain in a naval battle, "too riddled with arrows to even fall down." "Let me lie in the sea," he asks. "I am so full of wood that I shall float." So they lower him over the side, and he trails behind, bobbing in the sea like a buoy with darts. But by the time his son arrives, he is dead, and has sunk beneath the surface like a "curious sea anchor . . . the feather ends of some arrows still above water" (*WMM*, 344). What Aktḧelt sees of his father, then, is floating feathers, as much bird as fish. Siegfried Javotnik, in *Setting Free the Bears*, has a fond memory of a feathered father, too: Zahn Glanz, driving his taxi through the streets of Vienna on 11 March 1938, in an eagle-suit made from chicken plumage, "of a feather" with certain "dung-dropping" pigeons (*SFB*, 136), frightening the populace, some of whom took him for a seraph (*SFB*, 134,135), but hoping to arouse them to resist the imminent Nazi takeover—the eagle was the Austrian national emblem. What is remarkable is that Glanz was not Javotnik's biological father, but he remembers him as if he almost were. "Because even if it wasn't

carried in the genes, something of Zahn Glanz certainly got into me" (*SFB*, 156). One could also think of Dean Bodger, along with wrestling coach Ernie Holm the closest thing T. S. Garp had to a father in his early years at Steering Academy, catching the falling pigeon and thinking it was Garp, his chest bedecked with feathers, sent reeling by the impact of the bird. Later, his memory would become clouded and he would be convinced that it was Garp whom he had caught and not the pigeon—as if the bird's blindness (dazzled by the searchlights, it broke its neck against the fire escape [*WAG*, 36]) had been transmitted to his mind's eye, the one that sees memories (later in the novel, Garp's elder son will see his memories best with his blinded eye [*WAG*, 284]). "No doubt, in his advancing years, the moment of catching the bird had meant as much to the good-hearted Bodger as if he *had* caught Garp" (*WAG*, 38). The corpse of the bird unfortunately found its way into the glove compartment of his car, where it sprang to view the day the embarrassed dean had to produce his automobile registration for a rookie campus cop.

If a certain faithfulness to an allusion to the Book of Tobit seems able to account for how father figures in Irving's fiction are associated with various fowls, then it can perhaps be seen as an ever-greater sign of fidelity that the other striking feature of father Tobit (other than the way he was blinded), his willingness to bury corpses no one else would touch, finds its reenactments in Irving's fiction as well. T. S. Garp, attending Fat Stew's (Cushie's father's) funeral incognito, is approached by the hearse driver: "We're short some muscle for the casket." No one else, it seems, is young enough for the job. There were only two other pallbearers; Garp would have to lift one side of the coffin all by himself.

> A frail mutter reached Garp from the mourners at Fat Stew's funeral, aghast at the apparently unmovable casket. But Garp believed in himself. It was just death in there; of course it would be heavy—the weight of his mother . . . the weight of Ernie Holm, and little Walt (who was the heaviest of all). (*WAG*, 373)

At the last minute Dean Bodger steps forward and volunteers to be the necessary fourth. "And the catcher of pigeons, the bandy-legged sheriff of the Steering School, lifted his share of the coffin with Garp and the others"—father and son, in a way, united in a rehearsal of Apocryphal charity.

Trumper's charity is tested in a nearly identical way, while he journeys to his son with a fish—the second, and successful, attempt. He is traveling alone on a bus when it is discovered that a man in the rear of the bus has died, possibly from a heart attack. "Everyone seemed

afraid to touch the dead man, so [Trumper] volunteered to lug him off the bus. . . . Perhaps all the others were afraid of catching something, but [he] was more appalled at the fact that the man was unknown to everyone around him" (*WMM*, 322). Garp has a similar reaction to the shortage of pallbearers for Fat Stew's coffin: "How awful to be this unloved! he thought, looking at the gray ship that was Stewart Percy's casket" (*WAG*, 372). And in his writing, too, Garp is aware of a duty to the deceased, of a need to do something for them after they have died—not exactly to resurrect them, but to rescue them from oblivion. Starting a novel feels

> "like trying to make the dead come alive," he said. "No, no, that's not right—it's more like trying to keep everyone alive, forever. Even the ones who must die in the end. They're the most important to keep alive." (*WAG*, 409)

This insight came to Garp when he was younger, halfway through the writing of his first published work of fiction, "The Pension Grillparzer," a story about a recurring dream, one that seems to have a life of its own, like a well-written text.

> It is only the vividness of memory that keeps the dead alive forever; a writer's job is to imagine everything so personally that the fiction is as vivid as our personal memories. . . . Now he knew what the grandmother's dream meant. (*WAG*, 119)

Johanna was shocked when the Hungarian dream-teller told her her own private dream, "as if it were *news*" (*WAG*, 108). A husband and wife spending the night in a rented castle were suddenly awakened by the sound of horses; the wife went to a window and saw soldiers watering their mounts from a fountain that had been dry in the daylight. They were in armor as if from the time of Charlemagne, who had built the castle. The woman went back to bed and listened in the darkness, hearing not only the horses, the clanking of armor, and the soldiers' conferring in a forgotten language, but also the sound of water that seemed to flow throughout the castle, replenishing the fountain. The next morning there was no trace of the horses, no hoofprints, no droppings, and the fountain was dry—they must have dreamed it, but how could they both have done so? The wife, alone, twice later dreamed that she saw them again. They were fewer; the weather was colder, and they breathed with difficulty. Her husband would later die of a respiratory ailment.

The mystery of the story of the dream, that the husband and wife should have had the same dream, is also the mystery of its telling; for grandmother Johanna's own husband had died of a respiratory infection,

and she had dreamed the same dream, before anyone else in the story was born. The closer one looks at "The Pension Grillparzer," the more this particular mystery multiplies: already the dream has been shared three times—between the original husband and wife, between the grandmother and the gypsy, and presumably, between Johanna and her husband. It will be passed on after Johanna's death to her daughter, the narrator's mother. And the relation of the grandmother to Charlemagne's soldiers is rather like a shared dream: by a strange kind of thought transfer, in seeing and hearing them she was perceiving in an extrasensory way something that had an existence of its own outside her imagination, something as real and as much an intruder to her psyche as someone else's dream. "Of course I wanted to help them! But we weren't alive at the same time" (*WAG*, 109–10). But the writer Garp's ability to make the subject reach out and touch its frame does not stop there. Johanna and the rest of the narrator's family are renting rooms in a hotel when they are told the story of the dream, and that night there are strange noises in the hall—some animal is roaming the corridors, and apparently using the WC, for one can hear the water flowing. It is a unicycle-riding bear, and it all has a logical explanation. What only Garp's, and ultimately Irving's, interest in self-referential fiction can explain, though, is the haunting correspondence between the horses outside the rented castle and the bear in the hall: strange noises in the middle of the night of an animal and aquatic nature, the rented hotel room and the rented accommodation in the castle, the reality behind the appearances (there really is a bear, there really were armored soldiers in the courtyard, once).

"Now he knew what the grandmother's dream meant": that fiction should be as vivid as a personal memory—that the reader should see the text as Johanna heard the dream-teller's tale, surprised and disturbed that the teller should have known what he had no right to know, as if he had stolen it from the reader's own experience. Such a reader's reaction is a profound sense of *dêjà vu*. And such ought to be our own response here, for this story of a shared dream seems to speak to the situation we find ourselves in now, seeing that the recurring dream in Irving's fiction, surfacing at times explicitly as recurring dreams in Trumper's and Severin Winter's experiences, itself recurs elsewhere, in Tobit and in Fowles.

While Randy, the lover T. S. Garp threw out of Mrs. Ralph's house, was in jail reading Garp's novels (*WAG*, 275), the hero of Irving's recent bestseller has been suffering the consequences of his delay in leaving that woman's house. We left him there to pursue the name of Ralph in *The Water-Method Man* and to track down the recurring dream

fragments of fish, eyes, fathers, graves, and befouling birds in that novel as well as in the others that preceded *Garp (The 158-Pound Marriage* and *Setting Free the Bears)*. Though he gazed at her nakedness (wet from recent sex, she looked as if she had "been underwater for a long time" [*WAG*, 201]), he did little more. He had been unfaithful before—there had been a babysitter or two, and a mutual arrangement with another couple, recounted in chapter eight, and in the fictive *Second Wind of the Cuckold (The 158-Pound Marriage)*. But these manifestations of lust, as Garp would call them, led to no real change in his relationship to Helen. The episode with Mrs. Ralph is different, as the title of the chapter that immediately follows, "It Happens to Helen," implies.

It happens with Michael Milton, a graduate student in a course Helen is teaching in narrative technique. Garp found her one night at 2 A.M. awake in the living room reading one of Michael Milton's papers with a look on her face he couldn't quite place, but which he recognized as guilt. The student had made Helen an open proposition, and she had at least listened to him; but something kept her from going any further—she was not accustomed to feeling guilty about anything she did.

> She felt close to achieving this guilt-free state of mind, but she did not quite have it; not yet.
>
> It would be Garp who provided her with the necessary feeling. (*WAG*, 228)

Jealous of her attention, Garp was distressed that Helen was reading somebody else's work. He was himself in a writer's slump, drained of experience and devoid of ideas. T. S. had earlier courted Helen with "The Pension Grillparzer," sending it to her along with a proposal of marriage (*WAG*, 119–21). And before that, while still at Steering Academy, he had showed her one of his first stories, one whose plot seems remarkably appropriate for a younger writer in Irving's world. It concerns a father who is so concerned with protecting the dead that he kills his daughter and her lover because he thinks they have come to the cemetery to rob graves; but, rather like Pyramus and Thisbe, they had only come for a lovers' tryst. It was his need to imagine what Helen's body was really like under her sweat suit, we might recall, that made him realize he had a writer's imagination, as he stood there at the top of the school stadium, a javelin in his hand, its tip stained with frog gore, talking with her about becoming a writer. His choice of a life's career dates from that encounter; Helen had been there from the beginning. It is possible, therefore, to wonder if the unfortunate lovers in the story are meant in some way to represent young T. S. and Helen—it certainly couldn't be that Helen's father much resembled the girl's

father in the story, since Ernie Holm had none but the kindest thoughts for the couple, who had his fatherly blessing from the start (though it is important to remember that the father's action in the story was due to a terrible case of mistaken identity). But both Ernie Holm and the grave-guarding father share qualities, though not the same qualities, with a third father, Tobias's: an extraordinary concern with the welfare of corpses and an impairment of sight. Ernie Holm "was nearly blind" (*WAG*, 55), and when T. S.'s mother first came into the range of his blurred vision, as he still groped for his glasses in the Steering Academy wrestling room, her white nurse's uniform made him almost think she was his missing wife, who had also been a nurse and had left him fifteen years before. Helen, who had never really seen her mother, did make that mistake, and ran to Jenny Fields believing she had at last found her long lost parent. It was her father's brief moment of uncertainty that had propelled Helen, who took his fumbling "to be the necessary sign," into Jenny's arms, an instant affection that was yet not entirely misplaced, as she became "more of a mother to Helen than Helen had ever had" (*WAG*, 58–59). Both half-orphaned in a symmetrical way, T. S. and Helen were also, in the memory of that initial mistake in identity, distantly related, a quality that also proved important to the lovers in the Apocryphal tale, as it did for Daniel Martin and Jane. They owed that mistaken kinship to the resemblance Ernie bore to sightless Tobit. As T. S.'s wrestling coach, Helen's father was a father to Garp in those early days at Steering, training him in an avocation that ranked a close second to writing in Garp's order of priorities. Together with Dean Bodger, who is one of several father figures in Irving's world associated with dropping birds, these fragmentary fathers took the place of a real one for Garp, and they each had a fragment of the cluster of qualities originally assigned to Tobit, who was blinded by what dropped from a bird. The father in the first story Garp showed Helen had another, an obsession with defending the right of the dead to a decent, undisturbed burial.

Garp's jealous response to his wife's interest in Michael Milton's literary production goads him into breaking out of his slump to write something of his own for her to read. "Vigilance," then, is born out of "forced and unnatural circumstances," and it bears too much of the freight of the situation in which it was written, directed as it was to Helen with Michael Milton in mind—and Mrs. Ralph. It is a record of a jogger's running battle with motorists who speed through his neighborhood and jeopardize his children's safety. Two incidents in particular are told, one with a pair of bowlers in colliding Land Rovers, and another with a runty young plumber in a blood-red truck. The first one

occurs at night, and is not really a case that calls for the runner's speed limit enforcement, since he doesn't venture forth after dark except to investigate accidents, which this is. The second is much more serious; the narrator picks a fight with the reckless plumber, and the result is unexpected violence. O. Fecteau screeched to a stop when the concerned jogger threw a child's toy dump truck against his cab; five long metal pipes fell out of the back of his truck, and Garp's hero picks one up and starts flailing away at the taillights, fearless in the face of the livid driver with a Stillson wrench in his hand. Other things fall out of the truck, a screwdriver and spools of wire; holding the pipe "like a warrior's javelin" (*WAG*, 235), the narrator nudges them back toward Fecteau. The plumber returns to his truck and drives away, but then returns in fury, driving over lawns, grazing a car, almost running into a house, and finally coming to rest upside down with a broken collarbone. The protagonist feels somehow responsible, as well he might, for having provoked this berserk behavior. But he'll continue his neighborhood vigilance.

It was this new short story of Garp's that provided Helen with "the necessary feeling" to go ahead and have an affair with Michael Milton. Somewhere in the story, in her reading of it and in T. S.'s reaction to her less than enthusiastic response, she lost her guilt. Garp proved more concerned with what she thought of it than with her expressions of love:

> "Yes, yes," he said, impatiently, "I love you, too, but we can *fuck* anytime. What about the *story*?" And she finally relaxed; she felt he had released her, somehow. (*WAG*, 237)

Garp went to bed first, falling asleep more quickly than he should have. Helen watched him sleep, helped him through a wet dream; he woke up surprised, a look of guilt on his face when he realized where he was. "Garp would think, later, that it was as if Helen had *known* he had been dreaming of Mrs. Ralph. . . . Guiltless at last, Helen felt freed to have her dreams" (*WAG*, 239).

Mrs. Ralph? Was the story that had come between T. S. and Helen really about *her*? Garp had first met Mrs. Ralph in circumstances strikingly similar to the way the hero of "Vigilance" met the reckless plumber, running to catch up with her car because it was speeding through the neighborhood. It happened to be the day that Duncan was to spend the night at Ralph's. Though she didn't go berserk as O. Fecteau had done, Mrs. Ralph did break down and cry under the weight of her romantic troubles, Garp did spill blood-red tomato sauce on her dress, and they both became angry and called each other names. The other incident in Garp's story, the bowlers whose balls were switched

and who became embroiled with the police in an argument over which one had the name Garp's hero gave when he phoned in the accident (not wanting to get involved in the investigation, he had given as his own the one name he knew belonged to one of the bowlers), evokes the real name of Mrs. Ralph, Florence Cochran *Bowlsby* (*WAG*, 421). As a matter of fact, each part of that tripartite name, which for some reason always evaded Garp's memory (" 'Did you say "Mrs. Ralph"?' she asks him. 'Jesus, "Mrs. Ralph"!' she cries. 'You don't even know my *name*!' " [*WAG*, 206]), embodies, in whole or in part, the name of someone else: in *Coch/ran* one can see *Ran*dy, Mrs. Ralph's lover whom Garp first saw naked, "his young *cock* . . . lean and arched" (*WAG*, 202); in Flo*ren*ce *Oren* Rath, the rapist in *The World According to Bensenhaver*, the novel Garp begins to write in the wake of the terrible accident that is about to happen, now that Helen will take a lover.

Mrs. Ralph, whose "strangely twisted navel" caught T. S. Garp's eye when he came back for one more look ("He should have looked first at her eyes; then he might have realized she was wide-awake and staring back at him" [*WAG*, 209]), plays an umbilical role in Irving's *World*, occupying the center of the novel (chapters 9–11 out of 19), serving as a nodal point where various strands of action and imagery come together, a kind of threshold between the novel's intrigue and its inner dream, a dream whose fragments have marked our passage through Irving's world. She has not just three names, of course, but four; the pseudonym of filial origin that Garp continually gives her opens a passage from *Garp* onto the one Irving novel that does not appear in the list of Garp's published works—as if, like Mrs. Ralph's real name, it had been forgotten. *The Water-Method Man*'s Ralph Packer plays as central a role in that novel as his namesake does here, and it is perhaps not by accident that both that novel and Florence's real name are forgotten, present but unspoken, in *The World According to Garp*. Of the three novels Irving published before *Garp*, it is the one to which *Garp* is closest, the one that is also about how difficult it is for a son to become a father.

Mrs. Ralph intervenes in Garp's life, as Ralph Packer intervened in Trumper's, like a deranging angel (she will not be the only one; much later, T. S. will get an intimation of his coming death from a feminist with murder on her mind, a "fragile angel" who tries to run him over but crashes her car into a stone wall instead. "Garp knew she was dead because he looked in her eyes" [*WAG*, 401–2]). The ultimate outcome of her intervention will be *The World According to Bensenhaver*, the novel that will make Garp controversial enough for a feminist to want to do him in, the novel that will make him as famous as *Garp* has made

Irving. But the part of that novel that is reproduced in *Garp*, its opening chapter, could serve a more particular purpose, one that justifies *Bensenhaver*'s place at the end of a chain of events that begins with Mrs. Ralph's appearance on the scene, for it in fact shows by example the lesson Raphael taught Tobias.

One must first see, however, exactly how that chain is put together. Helen loses her guilt, the only obstacle in the way of an affair with Michael Milton, because of T. S.'s being more interested in what she thought of his new story than in what she thought of him. But that a story should get in the way of their love is strange, for he has been writing stories for quite a while, the entire length of their marriage. The wet dream that Helen watches him have suggests more; he went to sleep preoccupied with what he had given Helen to read, and he dreams of Mrs. Ralph. He had not been able to write anything at all until now, citing a lack of experience to draw upon; what little he has now produced draws upon his recent encounter with Ralph's mother, whose reckless driving gets transformed into O. Fecteau's and whose last name gives rise to the bowlers' pastime. Helen's suspicions had already been aroused when T. S. took so long to come back with Duncan; his surprise upon awakening, and the really guilty look on his face, seemed to confirm what she thought she already knew. As Garp's wife, she had more ways of knowing what was on his mind than are open to us, but one doesn't have to keep a vigil by his bedside to see the woman's presence in the story.

If Garp's first encounter with Mrs. Ralph finds itself translated into the run-in with O. Fecteau, both of which call for the hero to race to catch up with a speeding vehicle, their second meeting bears a resemblance in several ways to the earlier incident in "Vigilance," the wreck of the bowlers. Whereas the confrontations with the plumber and the speeding Mrs. Ralph took place in daylight, Garp's visit to her house and his protagonist's investigation of the bowlers' accident occurred after dark. There were really two parts to each nocturnal encounter: the short story's narrator had first come out to see what had happened to only one of the bowlers, who had managed to wreck his Land Rover all by himself; later his friend came along, driving with no lights, and crashed his vehicle into the first. It would look like "two exhausted rhinos caught fornicating in the suburbs" (*WAG*, 233). Garp's first glimpse of Mrs. Ralph at her house was of "a thunderous approach down the back staircase of a heavy, falling body" (*WAG*, 201); she landed on the kitchen floor with a still unspilled drink in her hand, as oblivious to what had happened as the first bowler, who, though upside-

down, "seemed only dimly sensitive to this change in his perspective" (*WAG*, 231). It was only later that Garp was called upon to remove her coupling partner. The bowlers' collision, in which their Land Rovers united "like coupled boxcars," had erotic overtones, even before it happened; the first had wrecked, he said, while trying to get his partner's bowling ball into his bag. " 'We crossed our balls.' That the fat man was referring to a bizarre sexual experience seemed unlikely" (*WAG*, 232). But he was sitting in his auto "cheek to cheek with this bowling ball, which he perhaps felt touching him as he might have felt the presence of a lover's severed head" (*WAG*, 231–32).

The police arrive in the end, in both scenes. Carrying Duncan home from Mrs. Ralph's, Garp was stopped by a squad car that had already picked up her lover Randy. His attempt to account for what he was doing led to yet another confusion over names; not knowing Ralph's last name, he was somewhat at a loss to explain where he had been (" 'Ralph Ralph?' the policeman with the pad said" [*WAG*, 211]), and when he had to give his own name, he began to feel very tired.

> "Yes, T. S.," he said. "Just T. S."
> "Hey, Tough Shit!" howled the kid in the car, falling back in the seat, swooning with laughter. (*WAG*, 212)

The first thing the police did when they came to investigate the double wreck of the Land Rovers was to seek out whoever it was that reported it, as Garp knew they would—a certain Roger, the pseudonym Garp had used on the phone.

> "*He's* Roger," the fat bowler kept saying. "He's Roger through and through."
> "I'm not the Roger who called you fuckers," Roger told the police. . . .
> After a while they began to call out into our dark suburb for another Roger. (*WAG*, 233)

More than the balls may be switchable here. Besides the Land Rovers, which were in fact also crossed up, each bowler driving the other's vehicle by mistake, the names involved, over which there is already some confusion, yield to a manipulation that underscores the correspondence already evident between this episode and Garp's night at Mrs. Ralph's. The correlation between bowlers and Bowlsby could be taken as a signal to be ready for more onomastic activity. Only one of the bowlers is named, so *Roger* is almost all one has to go on—but since everyone is looking for another Roger one might want to propose a close relation, part of the only other proper name available and distinguished from *Roger* only by the *v/g* with which the story begins, in the first

letters of the title (a curious recurrence of fives—five-mile runs, fifty-five push-ups, fifty-five sit-ups, five five-feet-long pipes—could be a recurrence of *V*'s), *Rover*. Roger and Rover are nearly as interchangeable as the bowlers, their balls, or their automobiles; but then so is, and perhaps more interestingly, the name of those cars, which a slight crossover converts to an allusion to either Mrs. Ralph's lover or "the randy Mrs. Ralph" (*WAG*, 200) herself, or perhaps both: Land Rover/Rand(y) Lover. "Vigilance" works like a dream, transmuting, switching, and rearranging lived experience into fiction.

Freed of feeling guilty, Helen decides to accept Michael Milton's proposal that they have an affair, but only under the condition that everything possible be done to keep it hidden. They will never be seen together; he must get a car, a big one with a bench seat in front so that she can lie down, out of sight of anyone's eyes. He does, and Helen is secretly transported to his apartment in a used station wagon the color of clotted blood with a "gaping chrome grill like the mouth of a feeding fish—*Buick Eight* in script across the teeth" (*WAG*, 244). The car that is a fish is also a casket, "gliding like the coffin of a king out of the parking lot" (*WAG*, 247).

That at least is how it appeared to Margie Tallworth, the girl Michael left for Helen, as she looked out of the fourth-floor ladies' room window and spotted Mrs. Garp stretched out in the front seat of the car. It is she who tells Garp, coming to his house with a note, intervening "like an avenging angel" with a sense of duty (*WAG*, 249). T. S. responds as if he were reenacting a ritual, entering once more into the Apocryphal myth that so often appears in Irving's world. He plays the dead father, the corpse underwater, pretending with his sons' connivance that he has drowned in the bathtub when Helen comes home.

> "Shall I come up?" she called.
> There was still no answer; Garp could hold his breath a long time.
> Walt shouted back downstairs to her, "Dad's underwater!"
> . . . In a minute or so, Garp whispered to Walt, "Tell her I'm *still* underwater, Walt." (*WAG*, 253)

He does. Duncan comes up to the bathroom. Garp was already out of the tub, with a finger to his lips for silence, then a paternal instruction: " 'Now, say it *together*.' Garp whispered. 'On the count of three, "He's still under!" ' " (*WAG*, 254).

This is how he tells Helen that he knows about Michael Milton. She runs up the stairs, fully believing in the event, thinking that only Garp could have conceived such a revenge, "*drowning* himself in front of

their children and leaving her to explain to them why he did it" (*WAG*, 254). From here on, the plot moves inexorably toward a tragic outcome, at the same time as it moves ever closer to the Apocryphal constellation of fathers, sons, blindness, fish, and death. Garp will take Duncan and Walt to the movies in order to be out of the house when Helen calls Milton to tell him it's finished. In the car the windshield keeps fogging over, and T. S. has trouble seeing the road. In the back seat the children fight for their favorite spot, the gap between the front bucket seat.

> Garp downshifted, hard, and the uncovered tip of the stick-shift shaft bit into his hand.
>
> "You see this, Duncan?" Garp asked, angrily. "You see this gearshift? It's like a *spear*. You want to fall on that if I have to stop hard?" (*WAG*, 258)

Helen and Garp had never gotten it fixed, each placing the responsibility on the other. Father and sons find a movie and stand in line for it in the rain. Walt points out a strange car, a station wagon the color of clotted blood except for the wood along its sides, shining in the streetlights.

> The slats looked like the ribs of the long, lit skeleton of a great fish gliding through moonlight. "Look at that car!" Walt cried.
>
> "Wow, it's a *hearse*," Duncan said. (*WAG*, 259)

Michael Milton was on his way to Helen's house, even though Garp had told her not to allow him to come. "No last fucks for the road, Helen. Just tell him good-bye. On the phone" (*WAG*, 255). But the car that was a fish for its glowing skeleton and its chrome grill teeth, and a coffin and a hearse for its shape, came up the driveway and stopped just in front of the garage. Helen ran to the driver's side to keep Michael from getting out. He kissed her, and she saw all over again in her memory the "bedroom of his apartment: the poster-sized print above his bed—Paul Klee's *Sinbad the Sailor*" (*WAG*, 260). They had been making love, then, beneath a painting of a youth spearing a fish, blood dripping from its gaping teeth.[3] Garp once courted her in a similar pose, a javelin in his hand stained with the gore of the frogs he had speared in the upper reaches of the Steering River, clicking it on the cement as he climbed the stadium steps to where she sat reading so that he wouldn't startle her; that was the afternoon he decided to be a writer (*WAG*, 62–63). It was the same weapon with which he would later court her again, the "warrior's javelin" of a plumber's metal pipe (*WAG*, 235) his hero wielded in the story he wrote to win her back from "someone else's words" (*WAG*, 228), Michael Milton's papers. The

miraculous fish in *The Water-Method Man*, Trumper's transparent talking eel with its visible plumber's helper inside, together with the Zorn-Witwer's plumber's helper of a stick-shift in *The 158-Pound Marriage*, make it likely that it was no accident that the enraged driver in "Vigilance" was a plumber. Garp's hero attacks his prey as Garp slew his frogs and Sinbad his sea monsters, with a lance, and deals with it as Tobias dealt with the fish, causing the plumber's truck to spill its contents, a metal viscera of tools, tubes, and spools of wire.

Michael persuades Helen to get in the car. They sit and talk in the darkness, as the windows fog up and the rain begins to encase the car in ice. At the movie theater Garp suddenly decides to call home to tell Helen he would rather talk to Michael Milton himself; but Helen, with Michael in the old car "groaning and snapping under its thickening tomb of ice" (*WAG*, 263), does not hear the phone. Garp's Volvo was also "shrouded in ice," the windshield totally opaque; but in his haste to get back home, he doesn't take the time to clean it. He compounds his blindness by coasting up his driveway in the dark as he always had done, with his engine dead and his headlights off. The children crowd each other for the favorite spot between the bucket seats. "How can you see *now*?" Duncan asks his father. "He doesn't have to see," said Walt.

> "I know this by heart," Garp assured them.
> "It's like being underwater!" cried Duncan. . . .
> "It's like a dream!" said Walt. (*WAG*, 266)

The dream is fatal to Walt and the underwater experience gravely injurious to Duncan, for the father's blindness—his frosted windshield as palely opaque as Tobit's white-filmed eyes (Tobit 1:10), as stained with Apocryphal allusion as Severin Winter's is with spermatic bird-dribble (*158PM*, 143)—is passed on to his older son through that impaling javelin-shaped stick-shift.

The violence of that tragedy is a shattering experience for everyone. Michael Milton loses an important organ, too, and with it his future chances for paternity. T. S., Helen, and Duncan retreat to Garp's mother's house to recover from their injuries. There T. S., his jaw wired shut, begins to sound like his father, the wounded airman, unable to say the *G* of his name (*WAG*, 281); he and Helen, listening late at night to someone in the vast house drawing a bath, sounds of water echoing like the fountain in the grandmother's dream, remember Walt in the bathtub, completely submerged, listening with his ears underwater—as if that was where his body lay in their memories, buried in water (*WAG*, 281–82).

Duncan will remember Walt through his missing eye; he can still see memories with it, and dreams (*WAG*, 284). T. S. will take a lot of time to come to grips with his memory of the accident; but when he does, he will begin to write *The World According to Bensenhaver*, a novel that will attain the popular success his previous novels never had. Part of this can be attributed to the explicit nature of its sex and violence; from what we know of it—its opening chapter, printed as the fifteenth chapter of *Garp*—it is evident that it is explicit in another way as well, in its graphic retelling of the central event of the Apocryphal story (central because all other events in the tale are either remedied or made possible by its outcome), Tobias's encounter with the fish. The first chapter of *Bensenhaver* is in fact the story of someone who finds herself threatened by a monster (like Tobias, who thought the fish would kill him: "and a fish jumped out of the river and would have swallowed the boy" [Tobit 6:2]) but who turns the situation around, killing her adversary by disemboweling him with just the kind of knife that Tobias might have used when he eviscerated his fish, had he come as well equipped for his task as she was for hers. It was the same knife with which Oren Rath first menaced her, "the long, thin-bladed fisherman's knife with the slick cutting edge and the special, saw-toothed edge that they call a disgorger-scaler" (*WAG*, 286), a knife whose power to turn what it cuts into a fish is demonstrated in that opening scene in Hope Standish's kitchen, when Oren touches it to her son's cheek, leaving a thin line of blood traced there: "It was as if the child had suddenly developed a gill" (*WAG*, 286).

So when Hope saves herself from death, though not from rape, by reaching for the knife on the floor of Oren's truck, and then stabbing and slicing her assailant, she is acting in accord with an allusion traceable throughout the entirety of the Irving corpus. The very intensity of the violence of her story brings it all the closer to looking like a repetition of the Apocryphal event. To a reader who knows what has already taken place in *Garp* and in Irving's three earlier novels, what happens here has a startling familiarity; to an unsuspecting passing motorist, it is startlingly strange. Seeing Hope kneeling by the roadside after her evisceration of Oren Rath, "[t]he driver had a vision of an angel on a trip back from hell" (*WAG*, 310); and when he stopped to look, and saw Oren's cut-open corpse, he thought he could recognize an internal organ: "Christ, look, I think that's his *liver*. Isn't that what a liver looks like?" (*WAG*, 313). But what is weird to this witness is precisely what is almost uncannily familiar to us. It is as if Hope had acted angelically, with a seraphic knowledge that was also imparted to

Tobias, who also revealed the liver of his assailant with a fish-cutting knife ("Cut the fish up," his angel said, "and take its heart and liver and gall" [Tobit 6:4]).

Oren itself is extracted from inside *Florence*, so that Garp may be practicing a similar operation on his experience, opening it up to view and breaking it apart, assigning part of Mrs. Ralph a.k.a. Florence Cochran Bowlsby to two bowlers, another part to the plumber who like her was stopped for speeding, and another piece to the oddly named rapist ("They all have weird names," the deputy told Bensenhaver [*WAG*, 300]). What Trumper wondered when he tried to read the bubbly speech of the transparent talking eel with the visible inner organ (*WMM*, 90) is also a question here: Is a bubble a word or a sentence or a paragraph? Is the piece of speech we're looking at the smallest unit of language in the system to which it belongs, or does it represent a collection of elements, one that can be opened up and broken down into parts with different uses, like the gall and the heart and liver of Tobias's fish?

That Oren Rath and his brothers "used just four or five words for almost everything," according to Bensenhaver (*WAG*, 300), was a mark of their ignorance. But all that is reported of Garp's father's speech is something quite similar (due, of course, to the war wound that sliced his brain), a "Garp" that served every purpose, from hello to joy, surprise, doubt, and discomfort, and that ultimately became the material for three other words as it progressively lost its letters. His next-to-last word was to be, in fact, the same as Oren Rath's: "*Aaa*" (Garp: *WAG*, 22); "*Aaahh!*" (Rath: *WAG*, 306). T. S. inherits precious little from his father—his eyes, as he learned from Stewart Percy, and his problematic name—so that this linguistic thrift may be significant, too, despite its pathological origin. His father's doubly economical discourse—both the polysemous, multipurpose "Garp" and its fragmentation into ever smaller pieces—does find a counterpart in the writer Garp's way of breaking down experience and words, of reusing the same material in such a way that the reader is haunted, as Irving's reader is also haunted, by a phenomenon of recurrence that grows more widespread and varied the closer one looks. And Irving's writing in particular is vaguely unsettling in the way it erases the accustomed boundaries separating both words and novels, showing that the former are sometimes composed of even smaller units of meaning and the latter are really parts of a larger discourse. *The World According to Garp* refers both to itself and to Irving's earlier fiction in such a way that it rewards the reader who goes back and reads these lesser-known works with a larger story, one

in which the cast of continuing characters expands to include names and objects, fish, eyes, fathers, and graves.

1. John Irving, *The World According to Garp*, p. 131. Irving's other novels are indicated by the following acronyms: *SFB=Setting Free the Bears; WMM=The Water-Method Man; 158PM=The 158-Pound Marriage.*

2. Roland Barthes, *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*, translated by Richard Howard as *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), p. 79.

3. "Battle-Scene from the Comic Opera 'The Seafarer,' " 1923.

3

Barthes's Amorous Discourse: Canon in U^{bis}

"Indeed, we often get an impression as though, to borrow the words of Polonius, our bait of falsehood had taken a carp of truth."—Freud, "Constructions in Analysis" (1937)

Roland Barthes describes himself as a child waiting for the return of his mother: "I would go, evenings, to wait for her at the U^{bis} bus stop, Sèvres-Babylone; the buses would pass one after the other, she wasn't in any of them" (*FDA*, 14–15).[1] Baby alone, not yet weaned (*sevré*)—from such an endured absence, Barthes maintains, language is born. He speaks of the child who concocts a bobbin, a spool that he alternately casts out and reels in, "miming the mother's departure and return" (*FDA*, 16). Distorted time is transformed into rhythm, and the death of the other (for to the child absence is tantamount to death) is delayed. Barthes's recent book, *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* (1977), is likewise born out of an "extreme solitude" (*FDA*, 1), for it is the discourse "of someone speaking within himself, amorously, confronting the other (the loved object), who does not speak" (*FDA*, 7). Like Plato's *Phaedrus*, it is a text about both love and literature in which discourse about one becomes discourse about the other. In *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973), Barthes had already spoken of writing as "the science of the ecstasies of language, its kamasutra" (*PT*, 6).[2] In the *Fragments* reading the text becomes a model for falling in love, and vice versa. Ostensibly an encyclopedia of the gestures of a person in love (Anguish, Declaration, Exile, Jealousy, Muteness, Night, Obscene, Rapture, Scene, Tenderness, Union, and sixty-nine other "figures"), this book becomes, the more one falls in love with it, a discourse on writing. And

when Barthes writes that "there is always, in the discourse on love, a person whom one addresses, though this person may have shifted to the condition of a phantom or a creature still to come" (*FDA*, 74), the amorous reader begins to see that he is himself that future phantom, addressed in ignorance by an author who has provided for such an eventuality by setting up his text to turn "like a perpetual calendar" (*FDA*, 7), a device capable of providing for future events without specifically predicting them.

"Rolling here and there," said Socrates in his denunciation of writing in the *Phaedrus*,[3] a written text wanders aimlessly like an errant orphan, liable to fall into the wrong hands, unable to defend itself without parental assistance. It is in just such weakness that Roland Barthes founds the discourse that constitutes the *Fragments*, the roll of the bobbin of the child who takes himself for an orphan. Socrates can argue that writing is but the faint imitation of speech because he assigns its origin to a father whom it may unfortunately outlive, but Barthes's discourse originates in the orphan, and not in the father. There is no father to guarantee a correct reading of the text or to verify its canonicity. Orphancy and errant rolling—no longer reasons not to take writing seriously—thus become precisely what make such a discourse possible.

Barthes was always an orphan; his father, a naval ensign, died in combat at sea when Roland was less than a year old. This paternal absence seems to open up the first break in the alphabetical order of the fragments that make up the autobiographical *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* (1975): *Actif/réactif, L'adjectif, L'aise, Le démon de l'analogie, Au tableau noir, L'argent, Le vaisseau Argo.* For it is in *Au tableau noir*, the title that does not really fit between *analogie* and *argent*, that the father's name first appears, inscribed on the lycée blackboard along with all the relatives of students who "had fallen on the fields of honor." Uncles and cousins abounded; only Barthes could announce a father: a source of embarrassment, "an excessive mark." When the chalk was erased, Barthes writes, there remained of this proclaimed grief nothing but "the figure of a home socially adrift [*sans ancrage social*]: no father to kill" (*RB*, 45; 49). The absent father is equivalent to a missing *ancrage*—the word that really fits the alphabetical sequence, the word that should have figured in the title but is suppressed, as the father's name was erased from the other *tableau noir*.[4]

There is another *ancre*, one that fulfills the same role toward the missing father that the bobbin's course plays in the absence of the mother: *encre*. In the *RB* fragment *La seiche et son encre*, he says of

his text, "I am writing this day after day . . . : the cuttlefish produces its ink: I tie up my image-system [*je ficelle mon imaginaire*] (in order to protect myself and at the same time to offer myself)" (*RB*, 162; 166). He spins such threads of ink, as the child spins out his reel, to fill up an absence; the lover does the same, faced with the silence of the one he loves: "*I love you, I love you!* Welling up from the body, irrepressible, repeated, does not this whole paroxysm of love's declaration conceal some *lack*? We would not need to speak this word, if it were not to obscure, as the squid [*la seiche*] does with his ink, the failure of desire under the excess of its affirmation" (*RB*, 112; 116).

These three models of discourse produced in the solitude of an endured absence (the mother: the child's bobbin on a string; the tie of a paternal anchor: filaments of underwater ink; the beloved: repeated declarations of love, like a squid's smoke screen) are joined by a fourth: the reader, whose absence the author overcomes by writing a discourse that is true to its etymology: "*Dis-cursus*—originally the action of running [*courir*] here and there" (*FDA*, 3; 7). The fragments of *Fragments of an Amorous Discourse* invite the reader to join in their running game—in particular, in that French parlor game known as *courir le furet*, in which the players form a circle around one of their number and pass from hand to hand, behind their backs, a ring; they sing a round, and when the music stops the one in the center must guess who has the *furet*. Each fragment of Barthes's book is "offered to the reader to be made free with [*pour qu'il s'en saisisse*: so that he can seize it], to be added to, subtracted from, and passed on to others." Sometimes in this game, Barthes continues, "by a final parenthesis" one holds on to the ring "a second longer [*une seconde encore*—a richly suggestive pause: a second encore, *bis*? Or, like the resurgent father, a second anchor?] before handing it on. The book, ideally, would be a cooperative: 'Aux lecteurs—aux Amoureux—Réunis" (*FDA*, 5; 9).

What is written here, in this penultimate chapter, is situated in that delaying pause, *in loco parenthesis*. In the same figure (*Absence*) where he speaks of the U^{bis} bus and of the child's game that defers the death of the mother ("To manipulate absence is to extend this interval, to delay as long as possible the moment when the other might topple sharply from absence into death" [*FDA*, 16]), he also tells the Buddhist parable of the master who holds the disciple's head under water for a very long time. Little by little the bubbles become rarer; at the last possible moment, the master brings him to the surface: "When you have craved truth as you crave air, then you will know what truth is." The absence of the other, Barthes continues, "holds my head underwater; gradually I drown, my air supply gives out: it is by this asphyxia

that I reconstitute my 'truth'" (*FDA*, 17). Like the Buddhist master, Barthes bathes the reader in an airless expanse; his book threatens to overwhelm, to suffocate the reader ("Writing is . . . a kind of steamroller. . . . It smothers the other" [*FDA*, 78]) by the fragmentation of its discourse. Its fourscore topics have no definable beginning or end, no apparent direction. "To discourage the temptation of meaning, it was necessary to choose an *absolutely insignificant* order" (*FDA*, 8): that of the alphabet.

To realize the "truth" that is at issue here, one must undergo this threatening experience: to be held below the surface of the text until that penultimate moment when one nearly perishes. "Truth is what, being taken away, leaves nothing to be seen but death," Barthes writes in the figure *Vérité*, using as an illustration the story of Emeth, the man of clay whose name meant "truth." He was used as a domestic servant, never allowed to leave the house. His name was written on his forehead. Each day he grew stronger; out of fear, the first letter of his inscribed name was erased, so that all that remained was *Meth*: "He is dead"—and he crumbled into dust (*FDA*, 230). Like Emeth, the reader of the *Fragments*—fascinated by the text, in love with it, believing it somehow to be addressed to him—is a prisoner. And his movements within this house that he is not allowed to leave begin to resemble Barthes's description of the *discours amoureux:* "a dust of figures stirring according to an unpredictable order, like a fly buzzing in a room [*à la manière des courses d'une mouche*]" (*FDA*, 197; 233).

If only a letter separates truth from death, then what is that letter? What happens when it is discovered? What would happen if it was erased?

From the beginning the front cover of the *Fragments* in the original French edition both attracts and puzzles, beckoning the reader with a visual fragment, as though offering a glimpse of what lies within. Below the title, and above the threshold of the publisher's name (*Seuil*), a detail of a painting in color: two intertwined arms, the hands delicately, barely, touching; a thumb centered precisely on the border between sleeve and wrist. Are these two lovers? Are they not both male?

A primal scene? Writing in the figure *Image* of the wounding experience of seeing the beloved engaged in tender conversation with someone else, Barthes almost seems to be describing what is visible here: "The image is presented [*découpée*: literally, "cut out"—which is what the cover is, as we will see], pure and distinct as a letter. . . . I am excluded from it as from the primal scene, which may exist only insofar as it is framed within the contour of the keyhole" (*FDA*, 132; 157). Yet beyond giving the feeling of having stumbled across a scene

of desire that was already going on before one arrived, this image can itself become an object of longing—not only evoking the reader's desire to know what is really going on, to complete the puzzle of which this is only a piece, but also charming him, capturing him as one is enthralled by the first sight of the beloved.

The first stage in love's course, Barthes writes, is "instanteous capture (I am ravished by an image)"(*FDA*, 197). Consider, for example, Goethe's young Werther, to whom Barthes returns for forty-nine examples of the gesture of the *amoureux* and who sees his beloved Charlotte for the first time "framed by the door of her house." Barthes comments on this scene: "The first thing we love is *a scene* [*un tableau*] . . . what is immediate stands for what is fulfilled: I am initiated: the scene *consecrates* the object I am going to love" (*FDA*, 192; 227). Both fragmentation and framing play a role in the mystery of love at first sight; it is possibly because one can see only part of that person that one is free to fall in love—yet somehow, the very part that is framed by that glimpse responds in a marvelous way to one's own desire. A great deal of chance and "many surprising coincidences (and perhaps much research)" are necessary, Barthes writes, before he can find the one image in a thousand that suits his desire. "Herein a great enigma, to which I shall never possess the key." What do I desire in this person—"a silhouette, a shape, a mood [*un air*]" (*FDA*, 20; 37)?

An *R*? (pronounced in French as *air*): its *P* formed by the figure on our left, its remaining limb by the arm of the other, best seen by turning the book at a slight angle. Is that what so attracts us to the image, the key to the enigma of our love at first sight, silhouetted in the keyhole ("a whole scene through the keyhole of language" [*FDA*, 26–27]) through which we view this primal scene, cut out, "pure and distinct as a letter" (*FDA*, 132)?

What does it stand for? *Roland*?

Perhaps—but I would like to propose another solution.

Truth, we have seen Barthes say, is that which, once removed, would leave only death. Despite the arbitrary exigency of his alphabetical ordering of topics, *Vérité*, true to its name, occupies the penultimate position. The only one to follow it is *Vouloir-saisir* (*The Will to Seize*), where what is really discussed is *non-vouloir-saisir*, the decision to cease the expression of one's desire, equivalent in this context to the death of the text, to the end of amorous discourse. Truth does in fact stand last before death.

But it is the figure standing just before *Vérité* in Barthes's alphabetical ordering, the one that would take over that penultimate place were *Truth* to disappear, that will command our attention in the pages

that follow. In *courir le furet*, the game to which Barthes likens the way his book might be read, one is invited to hold on to the ring—to one of the eighty figures of the *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*—a second longer, should one wish, before passing it on. *Union*, the antepenultimate figure, will be for us that *furet* here, the piece we will hold on to longer than the others, in accordance with Barthes's advice; like the cover, it will color our reading of the text.

Each of these fourscore figures is preceded by an "argument" that defines the area of the topic. Here, we read: "UNION. Dream of total union with the beloved." If an amorous reading of the text leads us to see "the reader" where Barthes says "the beloved," if indeed one remembers that he described the book in the introduction (*Comment est fait ce livre*) as a cooperative venture in which readers and lovers are reunited, then this figure, speaking of *union*, comes especially close to evoking the possible *reunion* to which the introduction appeals. The difference between these two words, which is reminiscent of the difference between reading the book as a discourse on love and reading it as a discourse on writing, is practically reducible to one letter, the same letter the cover frames.

Our holding on to the figure *Union* "a second more" will extend this parenthesis just enough to include the cover's letter, enabling us to read each in light of the other. The first of the four sections into which *Union* is divided speaks precisely of just such a superposition: of *frottis*, scumble, the thin, opaque layer of color that a painter sometimes applies to his canvas to change, ever so slightly, the appearance of the colors underneath, while still allowing the grain to show through.

> This is fruitful union, love's *fruition* (with its initial fricative [a mistranslation: Barthes's word here is *frottis*] and shifting vowels before the murmuring final syllable, the word increases the delights it speaks of by an oral pleasure; saying it, I enjoy this union in my mouth). (*FDA*, 226; 267)

The best name for the dream of total union with the beloved, Barthes has been saying in what leads up to this passage, is "the *fruition* of love." He can taste the union it denotes already, before its fulfillment in reality, just by saying it. The initial sensation, in turn, of this prior pleasure is *fr*—itself named best as *frottis*, while the name *frottis* itself bears the same relation to *fr* as *fruition* to *union*, for it not only names it but embodies it as well in its own enunciation. The cover of *FDA* bears the same *frottis* in the first two letters of its title, *FRagments*. And it displays a more literal *frottis* as well: that splash of color that catches our eye the first time we see the book, and that cannot but color, however faintly, our reading of its contents.

Tobias and the Angel, by Verrochio. Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees, The National Gallery, London.

There is a text behind the painting of which this is a detail. The back cover of the *Fragments* permits us to begin the reconstruction of that larger context, telling us the source of the cover's fragment: a painting by Verrocchio (or, more likely, by one of his students: authorial attribution will be a continuing problem here), *Tobias and the Angel*, a scene from the Apocryphal story with which we are now familiar. Here, at least, the reference is explicit. Yet we don't know who is responsible for it—was it Barthes who chose the picture, or was it just an editor at Seuil who decided to put a gloss on the cover (of which this is a gloss)? If one reason for its being there is to cause us to meditate on the Apocryphal story at the same time as we read the book, is there any limit on how far we may go into such a double reading? This question poses itself with all the more force when one realizes that a deep enough reading of Tobit will bring to the surface an exact analogue to the very problem that the presence of the picture on the cover raises: Tobit's fatherly benediction to his son on the eve of his voyage had ironically invoked the angelic guide who, in the form of a disguised Raphael, would indeed accompany him—"Go with this man; God who dwells in heaven will prosper your way, and may his angel attend you" (Tobit 5:16). Tobit was in that extraordinarlily lucky position, although he did not know it then, of being able to cause something to come about just by naming it. Barthes, similarly, can enjoy the dreamed-of union by pronouncing the right name for it, *fruition*; one might well wonder if something akin to this is going on in the evocation of the Tobias story itself by the fragment on the cover: Tobit had no idea that his prayer that an angel accompany his son was at that very moment being answered. Do the *Fragments* betray an awareness that they are accompanied by the Apocryphal book of Tobit?

Barthes surrounds his amorous discourse with a certain aura of innocence. Like Socrates' errant, rolling orphan-text, it does not really know where it is going:

> a constraint in the lover's discourse: I myself cannot (as an enamored subject) construct my love story to the end: I am its poet (its bard) only for the beginning; the end, like my own death, belongs to others; it is up to them to write the fiction, the external, mythic narrative. (*FDA*, 101)

Any reading of the *Fragments* must therefore run the risk of being noncanonical, of standing outside the text—as the books of the Apocrypha rest precariously on the edge of the Bible. Yet the author sanctions precisely this activity, asking the reader to continue the story he has begun: "Only the Other could write my love story, my novel" (*FDA*, 93). One is asked to accompany the text, to guide its desire, to play a role curiously like that which Barthes attributed to Fourier's *Angélicat*,

which "conducts desire: as if each man, left to himself, were incapable of knowing whom to desire . . . blind, powerless to invent his desire" (*SFL*, 119).[5] *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*, indeed, is dedicated to an angel:

> I dedicate the dedication itself, into which is absorbed all that I have to say:
>
> "A la très chère, à la très belle,
> Qui remplit mon coeur de clarté
> A l'ange . . . " (*FDA*, 77)[6]

Although this dedicatee is reduced to silence, although "your own discourse seems to you to be suffocated under the monstrous discourse of the amorous subject," Barthes reassures us that the angel, despite his silence and because he is desired, has, all the same, a certain role to play (as the reader is silent and yet desired: as this book is the discourse "of someone who speaks within himself, in love, facing the other [the loved one], who does not speak"):

> In *Teorema*, the "other" does not speak, but he inscribes something within each of those who desire him—he operates what the mathematicians call a catastrophe (the disturbance [*dérangement*] of one system by another): it is true that this mute is an angel. (*FDA*, 79; 94)

The beloved, the silent other, the angel: the reader, Raphael—his initial inscribed ("he inscribes something within each of those who desire him") on the cover, formed by the union of those two figures? The angel R.: danger, *dérangement*?

Meanwhile—we recall—Tobias and Raphael continue their journey, along which they will find the river and the jumping fish. On the angel's advice Tobit's son will catch the creature, open it up, and put its inner organs to specific uses. If we thought we saw the father in the fish when, reading Irving and Fowles, we found a floating father (Old Thak), a water-buried one (John Marcus Field), or a fatherly friend compared to a salmon (Dr. Grogan), we ought especially to see Barthes's father in that light; as irrepressible as the leaping fish that frightened Tobias, Ensign Louis Barthes (*RB*, 184), though buried at sea and erased from the blackboard of his son's lycée, surfaces again in the name of the school, in the sign (the *enseigne*) above the door, *Louis-le-Grand* (*RB*, 44; 49).

In the fragment *Au tableau noir, ancrage* was the word that would have fit the alphabetical sequence of titles, and that therefore, though at first lost and hidden within the body of the text, is lifted to a position of prominence. The same double action of concealment and display is characteristic of the squid and its ink, and of Barthes, in a passage

already quoted: "I tie up my image-system (in order to protect myself and at the same time to offer myself)." In the *FDA* figure *Cacher (To Hide)*, Barthes gives this subject a carnival context: "*Larvatus prodeo*: I advance pointing to my mask: I set a mask upon my passion, but with a discreet (and wily) finger I designate this mask" (*FDA*, 43). The occasion for this comment is *La Fausse Maîtresse* of Balzac, in which a man hides his love for the wife of his best friend by pretending to love another woman, whom he parades to the woman he secretly loves in a Mardi Gras masquerade. The double movement of concealment and display is intensified in this carnival scene by the fact that, although the beloved woman thinks he is unaware of her presence in the crowd of spectators, it was precisely because he knew she would be there that he invited the fake mistress—and by the fact that he reveals the pretended mistress through the disguise required by a masked ball: *Larvatus prodeo.*

On the last page of *RB*, Barthes writes of the usefulness of a "Carnival esthetic," a way to recuperate both violence and "the monster of Totality" (*RB*, 180); and at the end of *Au tableau noir*, he writes of a "carnivalesque affinity" between the fragment (the form his discourse assumes) and the dictée (the kind of extemporaneous composition that was the peculiar forte of the lycée professor whose idea it was to write Barthes's father's name, among others, on the blackboard). It is almost as if the figure of the father were surfacing again in the person of that professor who displayed an admirable "ease in composition" (*RB*, 45) in his ability to improvise dictées on any subject, no matter how far-fetched—as does Barthes, in *The Circle of Fragments*: "Take the words: *fragment, circle, Gide, wrestling match, asyndeton, painting, discourse, Zen, intermezzo*: make up a discourse which can link them together. And that would quite simply be this very fragment" (*RB*, 93).

Fragmentation is a kind of violence (Tobias fragmented the fish); writing in fragments prevents a monstrous totality from commanding the text, from subordinating it to a unified meaning. Elsewhere in *RB* (in *Science Dramatized*, where he also expresses his delight in learning of Saussure's anagrams)[7] Barthes writes of the "carnivalesque overturning" of traditional learning that would follow from the idea that "there is no science except of differences" (*RB*, 161). Robert Schumann (the composer, in fact, of *Carnaval*, a collection of subtitled fragments) is according to Barthes the man who best understood and practiced "the esthetic of the fragment," in which each piece is sufficient in itself and is yet "but the interstice of its neighbors" (*RB*, 93). The two words in *Au tableau noir* on which we have been focusing our attention,

ancrage and *carnavalesque*—partly because of their ties to other parts of the text (*ancrage/ancre* to the squid's *encre; carnavalesque* to the discourse on the fragmentary esthetic), partly because of their reincarnation of the father (no social *ancrage* because the father is already buried at sea; the lycée professor as the quasi-father of Barthes's fragmentary discourse)—suggest their own difference: if we fragment them, doing the same violence that Tobias performed on the fish, we would find that they give rise to a name for this very violence—*CARN/aval+ ancr/AGE CARN/AGE*: a word that is itself the exact anagram (that is, the breaking-apart and rearranging) of the paternal *ancrage*. Does this *ancrage*, the father's trace, then conceal a carnage, and thereby offer a way to commit the murder Barthes complains he cannot perform: "No father to kill . . . : great Oedipal frustration!"? Could the father's "excessive mark" be thus violated, broken and redistributed, so as to mark that very violence? (Carnality, by definition, excludes fish. But *carnaval* is defined by reference to fish: *carnem levare*, the putting-away of meat, the last moment that meat can be enjoyed before Lent, a penultimate celebration.)

Raphael's instruction in the use of the fish is the scene depicted in the painting, the center of which Barthes has taken for his cover fragment. It is Tobias's hand that is so ambiguously placed on the angel's. In turn, Raphael's right hand holds a golden box that will contain the drugs that the fish provides. Tobias's left hand, beyond the frame Barthes gives us, holds the receipt for the debt he will collect, and the fish. Barthes fragmented the painting and took out its heart, quoting it out of context for his own ends. One could easily imagine that one of them was to provide a graphic example of what *The Pleasure of the Text* describes as the most erotic part of a body: "where the garment gapes" (*PT*, 9), the border between skin and cloth, where Tobias is placing his thumb—or better, the flesh-revealing slits in Raphael's sleeve. Indeed, surely one reason the cover is so attractive is that it seems at the same time to uncover, to allow us a glimpse of something else.

Although we have portrayed it as a *jeu de société* (the parlor game known as *courir le furet*), reading Barthes's *Fragments* is, of course, a solitary activity. Faced with the silence of the other (of the author: as the lover discourses in the face of the silence of his beloved, as the child casts out his reel), the reader (who, although invited to project himself into the role of the angel on the cover, must also imitate Tobias, breaking open the text to find its gall, operating to remove its ophthalmic obstruction: making its opaque cover transparent) is in danger of

wandering off on a trackless path, and needs some occasional sign that he is on the right road—if not an angel, perhaps a fish: we will reel in two more before this discourse is over.

The route we charted for ourselves, the reader may remember, was that projected by the figure *Union*, supplemented by the picture affixed to the cover of the book. The first of that figure's four sections spoke of a *frottis*; the second has even more clearly a visual concern: how to draw the androgyne whom Aristophanes describes in Plato's *Symposium*, an impossible task. The third likewise seeks to figure out the image of a couple, that of the perfect union. To accomplish that, according to Barthes's dream of the ideal, each partner would have to be able to substitute himself for the other, "as if we were the vocables of a strange new language, in which it would be absolutely legitimate to use one word for the other." But since each object of his love falls short of such an interchangeability, Barthes dreams instead of coalescing them all into one: "for if I united [*si je réunissais*] X, Y, and Z, by the line passing through all these presently starred points, I should form a perfect figure: my other would be born" (*FDA*, 228; 270). What Barthes says here in a lover's context, we would say concerning our relation to his text—although we would prefer to use his own words to declare it: "Only the reading loves the work, maintains with it a relation of desire. To read is to desire the work; it is to want to be the work, to refuse to double the work in words other than the work's own" (*CV*, 78–79).[8] To double the work, using its own words, in order to be loved by the object of our love: to form "out of all these points" a double—in particular, another U (*Union* being the only figure to begin with that letter in the *Fragments*), a U^{bis}: long-awaited vehicle.

All of this might have seemed possible as long as we remained in the role of the mute angel to whom Barthes addresses his text, Raphael to his Tobias. But we realized that we were also Tobias, breaking open and redistributing the elements of the *Fragments* as he had done with the fish, and thereby in danger of doing something more than reading, for "to write is in a certain way to fracture the world (the book) and to redo it" (*CV*, 76). And "to pass from reading to criticism is to change desires, to desire no longer the work, but one's own language" (*CV*, 79). To pass from Raphael to Tobias, to assume fully the latter's role, would in fact be to develop a new desire, one directed not toward Barthes's text but elsewhere. Indeed, Tobias found that the fish had an erotic application as well. Along the way, Raphael tells him about Sarah and her misfortunes and strongly suggests that Tobias is the best man for her, that with the fish's heart and liver he will be able to win her

definitively by frightening away the demon: " 'Do not be afraid, for she was destined for you from eternity . . . ' When Tobias heard these things, he fell in love with her and yearned deeply for her" (Tobit 6:17).

This is not the first time our role has changed, however, for we were once what has become in this Apocryphal *urtext* the irrepressible fish, submerged, made to suffocate by the refusal of Barthes's amorous discourse to reveal a clear direction, a single sense. The pause in which we have been writing is not only the "second encore" for which we hold on to the *furet/figure Union*, but also the prolonged moment endured by the Buddhist disciple. Like the fish, and like the absent father, the reader too must surface. But if we become that fish, then once we emerge from the confinement that we have sought to escape, the discourse of the text, we are no longer in control of our own discourse; we are subject to another's fragmentation, another's desire.

This ability to play all three roles (angel, son, fish), this necessity to run from one to another to trace our androgynous double of the text, gives us an interchangeability like that which Barthes seeks in his "other," the "perfect figure" that would be formed by the reunion of "X, Y, and Z." But in saying that, are we not in danger of projecting ourselves into Barthes's love story, as would a naïve reader of sentimental fiction? Or as would Barthes himself, who confesses in the figure *Identification* that he not only projects but "adheres" to the image of the love in a romantic novel?

> I devour every amorous system with my gaze and in it discern the place which would be mine. . . . I am to X what Y is to Z. . . .
> . . . Werther is in the same place as Heinrich, the madman with the flowers, who has loved Charlotte to the point of madness. . . . A hallucination seizes me: *I am Heinrich!* (*FDA*, 129–30)

Besides Barthes, who indeed is Heinrich? The network in which he figures, Goethe's *Werther*, is to Barthes's amorous discourse as his figure *Union* is to ours (ultimately, a W behind our double U): a preexisting text from the *lecture regulière* (*FDA*, 8; 12: a regular, methodical reading, as of a breviary) of which Barthes constructs the *Fragments*. In *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*, he mentions, among other future projects, taking a classical text and relating everything in daily life to it for a year, making of that book a calendar (*RB*, 153). In *The Pleasure of the Text*, he contemplates the reversal of origins that makes an earlier text seem to emerge from a later one (Flaubert, for example, from Proust), and describes Proust as his *mandala*: his reference work, his "circular memory," as the letters of Madame de Sévigné were for Marcel's grandmother and chivalric novels for Don Quixote (*PT*, 59). Goethe's *Sufferings of Young Werther* is manifestly that for Barthes's

Fragments, appearing in a category of its own in the *tabula gratulatoria* at the end of Barthes's book in its original French edition, placed between the friends whose conversations are among his sources and the sixty-nine authors from B to W (Balzac to Winnicott) whom he quotes.

Heinrich is a man who was once a fish. In the letter of 30 November 1772, written less than a month before his suicide, Werther describes an "apparition" that was certain to have given him pause. As he was walking by the river, he saw in the distance a man in a green coat crawling among the rocks, appearing to be looking for herbs. Werther approached him and asked what was the object of his search. "I look for flowers, but find none." Werther then pointed out that this was not the season for flowers, but the stranger insisted that they ought to be there in abundance. A strange smile distorted his face when Werther asked what the flowers were for.

> "If you won't give me away," he said, pressing his finger to his lips, "I've promised my girl a bouquet." . . . "And what is her name?" "If the Estates General would pay me," he replied, "I'd be a happy man. Now it's all over with me. Now I am . . . " A tearful glance to heaven told everything. "So you were happy?" I asked. "Oh, I wish I were again," he said. "At that time I was as happy, as merry, as light as a fish in water." (*W*, 69)[9]

"Heinrich!" an old woman cried out—it was his mother, calling him home to eat. Werther took the opportunity to ask her about her son. He has been docile for the past six months, Werther learns; until then he had been raving mad, lying in chains in the madhouse for a whole year. She would have continued, but Werther interrupts to ask what Heinrich meant by that time when he was so happy: it was when he was out of his mind, confined in the asylum, knowing nothing of his condition.

> This struck me like a thunderclap. I pressed a coin into her hand and left her in haste. "When you were happy!" I exclaimed, walking swiftly toward the city, "When you felt as happy as a fish in water!" (*W*, 70)

This image affects Werther deeply. "Lord in Heaven! Have You so decreed men's fate that they are happy only before they attain the state of reason and after they have lost it again?" He continues in this vein, comparing the man's melancholy to his own. The letter concludes with this passage:

> Father, Whom I do not know! Father, Who once filled my whole soul but now turn Your countenance from me, call me to You. . . . Could a man, a father, be angry if his son returned unexpectedly, threw his arms about his neck, and cried: "I am back, father! Be not angry because I cut short my journey, which it was your will that I should endure longer." (*W*, 70–71)

In a recent book on Goethe's novels, E. A. Blackall takes this quasi-prayer of Werther's to be a "particularly revealing comparison of himself with the Prodigal Son."[10] Yet the father in the New Testament parable never sent his son on a journey ("which it was your will that I should endure longer"); it was the son who wanted to leave, "squandering his inheritance in reckless living" (Luke 15:11–14).[11] Werther is indeed using biblical imagery here, but we are reminded not so much of the Gospel's Prodigal Son as we are of the Apocryphal Tobias when in Goethe's text we encounter a young man

> whose father has sent him on a journey: Werther addresses his heavenly Father, begging forgiveness for returning prematurely from the earthly pilgrimage on which God sends every man; his suicide, which he contemplates in this moment, would constitute both the admission of his inability to fulfill what his Father expects of him and the means to return home;
>
> who is charged with the mission of retrieving a sum of money: the very first letter Werther writes from the country village where he has gone at the beginning of Goethe's novel and where he will fall in love with Charlotte indicates that one reason he has traveled there is to collect for his mother a legacy that had been held back (*W*, 1);
>
> who goes down to the river and meets a frightening fish: like Tobias, Werther experienced the shock of *déjà vu*, seeing himself in Heinrich; in his next letter we learn that the uneasiness he experienced in seeing this man who was once a fish was uncannily accurate: The woman the madman loved was Charlotte;
>
> who falls in love with a girl who is described to him en route by his traveling companion, and who turns out to be a distant relative:
>
> > Barthes: Charlotte . . . will be pointed out to him before he sees her; in the carriage taking them to the ball, an obliging friend tells him how lovely she is. (*FDA*, 136)
> >
> > The Book of Tobit: When they approached Ecbatana, the angel said to the young man, "Brother, today we shall stay with Raguel. He is your relative, and he has an only daughter named Sarah. I will suggest that she be given to you in marriage, because you are entitled to her and to her inheritance, for you are her only eligible kinsman. The girl is also beautiful and sensible. (6:9–12)
> >
> > Goethe: "Cousin?" I said, as I offered my hand. "Do you think I deserve the good fortune of being related to you?" "Oh," she said with an animated smile, "We would be sorry if you were the worst among them." (*W*, 13)

But if Werther is following in the footsteps of Tobias, he does not share in his predecessor's success. His journey is not successfully completed nor is his father's charge fulfilled; he comes to a premature end. Unlike Tobias, however, he had no accompanying guide—the last sentence of the novel, Barthes takes pains to point out (for the sentence forms the alternate title of the figure *Seul*), is "no clergyman attended" [*pas un prêtre ne l'accompagnait:* Barthes's American translator is more faithful to Goethe than he is to Barthes] (*FDA*, 210, 249).

As a suicide, Werther was denied Christian burial; like the Apocrypha, which though not accepted into the canon is granted space on the edge of the Bible, Werther's body will lie on the outer margin of hallowed ground:

> In the churchyard there are two linden trees, at the rear in the corner, toward the field; there I wish to rest . . . I do not expect Godfearing Christians to lay their bodies near that of a poor, unhappy man like me. (*W*, 94)

Goethe's reader is reminded here of two other trees, those whose destruction sparked a remarkably ill-tempered outburst from Werther: "Cut down! I could go mad, I could murder the dog who struck the first blow at them" (*W*, 62). These, too, were planted in quasi-hallowed ground, the parsonage yard, and their demise was caused by an unwelcome resurgence of interest in the question of biblical canonicity. The wife of the new pastor had pretentions to learning and found that their shade made it difficult to read. Her studies involved "meddling in the investigations concerning the canonical books. . . . Only such a creature could possibly have cut down my nut trees" (*W*, 62).

In biblical terms a book is noncanonical if it is not divinely authorized. We are on similarly apocryphal ground when we read *Werther* through the *frottis* of the story of Tobias, a perspective we owe to Barthes's having chosen a fragment of it (the fragment from Verrocchio's painting of the story) to grace the cover of his book, for the object of our analysis has no secure authorial origin: we cannot be certain that what we are reading is Barthes reading Geothe reading Tobit. Who is the father of this text, of this configuration of wandering orphans?

Is what we are reading coming into existence as we read it? "Is it my future that I am trying to read, deciphering in what is inscribed the announcement of what will happen to me, according to a method which combines paleography and manticism?" (*FDA*, 214) Barthes provides a footnote to this paleographic reference that speaks to our own concern, citing a character in Balzac's *Les Secrets de la princesse de Cadignan*: "A knowledgeable woman can read her future in a simple

gesture, as Cuvier could say, seeing the fragment of a paw [*patte*]: this belongs to an animal of such-and-such a size, etc." (*FDA*, 214; 253). Cuvier's reconstruction itself appears in Barthes's text as a fragment whose original context, like that of the prehistoric creature, can be restored—one has only to reread the Balzacian short story from which it has been borrowed. This paw fragment is surely a privileged, handy example, bearing a remarkable resemblance to the paleographic reconstruction we have already performed on the hands on the cover of the *Fragments*. And this activity itself resembles Barthes's description of how one falls in love, enthralled, enraptured by "an unknown image (and the entire reconstructed scene functions like the sumptuous montage of an ignorance)" (*FDA*, 194). The beloved is unaware of his effect on the lover, who sumptuously builds upon this innocence. Barthes writes of this as if he were speaking innocently of how one falls in love: yet each of the three examples he gives of the "innocence of the image" that the lover stumbles across points unmistakably to that image on the cover whose fascination is such that it can induce the reader to fall in love with Barthes's book. They are not, perhaps, so innocent:

> When Werther "discovers" Charlotte (when the curtain parts and the scene appears), Charlotte is cutting bread-and-butter. What Hanold [in Jensen's *Gradiva*] falls in love with is a woman walking (*Gradiva*: the one who comes toward him), and furthermore glimpsed within the frame of a bas-relief. . . . Grusha, the young servant, makes a powerful impression on [Freud's] Wolf-man: she is on her knees, scrubbing [*frotter*] the floor. For the posture of action, of labor, guarantees, in a way, the innocence of the image. (*FDA*, 193; 228)

Food-slicing, walking, and polishing (*frotter/frottis*), although presented here as the most indifferent of activities, are not without their counterparts in what we have seen in Barthes's choice of a cover: Tobias will cut open the fish and, after removing certain vital organs, eat it; the two figures caught in Barthes's frame are walking, advancing on an ancient journey; it is Barthes, like the maid, whom we stumble upon putting a polish, a *frottis*, on his text. His own commentary on the innocence of this housework suggests that we were led to find him in this position, decorating his book with an image that suggests only lovers and not a story about how texts are read, as if he chose the fragment for its color and its immediate usefulness, not for its original context:

> The more the other grants me signs of his occupation, of his indifference, of my absence, the surer I am of surprising him, as if, in order to fall in love, I had to perform the ancestral formality of rape, i.e., surprise (I surprise the other and thereby he surprises me: I did not expect to surprise him). (*FDA*, 193)

The woman who could read her future as Cuvier could read the past is Diane d'Uxelles, princess of Cadignan; the man whose gestures she interprets is Daniel d'Arthez, a writer who until now had devoted all his energy to his work, leaving no time for pleasure, and who was profoundly ignorant of women. At the age of thirty-eight, his writings have finally brought him financial success: "You have justified your heraldic device," a friend tells him, "which forms the pun so sought after by our ancestors: *ARS, THESaurusque virtus.*"[12]

A "female Don Juan" (*SP*, 42), the princess has had a multitude of lovers; she and d'Arthez would form a very unlikely pair were it not that she shares with him the quality of never having experienced love: "I have been amused, but I have not loved" (*SP*, 19). Mutual friends, confident that each would fulfill the other's deepest desire, arrange an initial encounter. It is an unqualified success: "D'Arthez let love penetrate his heart in the manner of our uncle Tobie, without the least resistance . . . The princess, that beautiful creature . . . became, vulgar though the evil of these times may have made the word, the dreamed-of angel" (*SP*, 38).

Daniel falls in love like Laurence Sterne's Toby—but also, strangely, like Tobias (in French, Tobie), for each (1) falls in love with a woman who, paradoxically, has had a number of lovers/husbands and yet no real lover/husband, (2) is introduced to the woman by a matchmaking mutual acquaintance, and (3) follows in the footsteps of a Raphael: D'Arthez's "incomprehensible" attachment to an ignorant woman of the lower class—a liaison that preceded his encounter with the princess and that constituted his first sexual adventure—is "justified" by the example of the painter Raphael as the lover of his model, the vulgar Fornarina (*SP*, 25). But that earlier attachment is in fact a prefiguration of d'Arthez's affair with Diane d'Uxelles, for the comparison with Raphael and his model was made by a close friend (with the similarly angelic name of Michel Chrestien) who himself had been, long before d'Arthez, in love with the princess—and of whom the narrator of *Les Secrets* says, "He could have offered himself as a model in this genre [the genre Raphael-La Fornarina], he who saw an angel in the duchess of Maufrigneuse [Diane's former name]" (*SP*, 25). Michel, who died in the civil disorders of 1832, fulfilled the role of guide for Daniel, in whom he confided his hopeless desire for Diane, thereby laying the groundwork for d'Arthez's later passion. It is because he knew the late Chrestien that he came to meet Diane, who wanted to learn from him the details of Michel's adoration: "Without knowing it, Daniel was to profit from these preparations due to chance" (*SP*, 35). D'Arthez had followed the footsteps of his angel-named friend in the most literal of

ways: accompanying Michel as he ran alongside the princess's carriage, he tells her, "struggling against the speed of your horses, so as to keep ourselves at the same point on a parallel line, in order to see you . . . to admire you!" (*SP*, 32). The purpose of the meeting arranged between d'Arthez and Diane was ostensibly to share reminiscences of their late mutual friend, but its result was that Daniel came to desire "to inherit the estate of Michel Chrestien" (*SP*, 34). Diane, for her part, fell in love with Daniel; he gave her the love that she had never known. Their ending was a happy one—though the reader's satisfaction is somewhat tempered by these concluding words: "[D'Arthez's] publications became excessively rare" (*SP*, 65).

Raphael, Tobie—what is in a name? Daniel's, when broken apart, like Tobias's fish, yields a double content, art and money. In Diane's estimation, d'Arthez has a fish's value: "I would willingly apply to my great Daniel d'Arthez what the duke of Albe said to Catherine de Médicis: The head of one salmon is worth those of all the frogs" (*SP*, 59). Only the angle (the angel/*l'ange* Michel who brought them together?) of an L separates his first name from Diane's: they were destined by their names, perhaps, to embrace in a perfect reunion of love. DANIE/L/DIANE: do these shared letters not possess an androgynous quality, a successful and graphic depiction of what Barthes says he could not draw in the figure *Union*, the bisexed creature Aristophanes bisects in the *Symposium*?

But it is Daniel's last name that really seems to possess a mantic, predictive power. Consider the puzzle pieces that Barthes's text provides:

> Emeth, the household servant whose fate it was to lose the first letter of his name, thereby changing its meaning fatally;
>
> d'Arthez, the writer who fell in love, whose name is broken open to reveal *ARS* and *THES*;
>
> Barthes, the writer in love, whose name can be broken apart, its first letter dissolving into the transparency of a *frottis*, thereby becoming the name of his fictive predecessor—(B)Arthez—and causing Balzac to predict Barthes.

One fragment remains to be examined in the figure *Union*, the *furet* we have chosen to play with in the circular game to which the *Fragments* invites us, over which we linger "by a last parenthesis . . . a second more" before handing it on. After the *frottis*, the androgyne, and the search for the perfect other, a companion with interchangeable roles, there is this:

> 4. Dream of total union: everyone says this dream is impossible, and yet it persists. I do not abandon it. "On the Athenian steles, instead of the heroicization of death, scenes of farewell in which one of the spouses takes leave of the other, hand in hand." (*FDA*, 228)

The hands insist (the hands that play the game of the *furet*, the hands on the cover, the hand that Cuvier reconstructs), and so does Barthes's impossible dream of (re)union. Sometimes such an insistence induces the dreamer, to whom it means so much, to tell the dream; and therein lies a danger, as he describes it in the *RB* fragment *The Galloping Induction*: "Temptation of reasoning: from this, that the narrative of dreaming [*ou de drague*: or of sexual conquest] excludes its auditor (from the pleasures of its referent), to induce that one of the functions of Narrative would be to *exclude* its reader" (RD, 98; 102). Yet the real danger, Barthes is saying, lies in the "galloping," hasty, and therefore false conclusion that what is true of dream-telling is true of storytelling. In the same fragment he counters this precipitate induction with the contention "that narration is in no way projective"—that the storyteller does not put himself into the picture of what he is telling (as Barthes does, literally, in the case of a painting of a polar landscape in the *Fragments*, seeing himself in his sadness seated on one of the ice floes: "this void requires that . . . I project myself there" [*FDA*, 133]). What we are writing here is likewise nonprojective, or at least means to be, since it is but a presentation of some of Barthes's recent texts on their own terms, in their own words. Yet, as in a dream, there are images and words that insist, as does, to borrow an example from Barthes's own discourse, *galopante* in the title. It has connotations (running, equitation) that are foreign to the fragment, as if, like the reader, it were excluded from that discourse. But if we listen to its insistence, we will find it again, elsewhere in the Barthesian context. It takes a great deal of luck, "many surprising coincidences (and perhaps much research)," Barthes writes in a passage we have quoted before (*FDA*, 20), "before I can find the one image in a thousand that suits my desire." Taking him literally, we could follow a train of coincidences to find that image, tracing a recurring clue through the four modern pretexts to our reading of the *Fragments (Werther, RB, Les Secrets de la princesse de Cadignan*, and *La Fausse Maîtresse*):

> Barthes returns to *Werther*, the book from the "regular reading" of which he constructed the *Fragments*, forty-nine times.
>
> The fragment of *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* to which we have most often returned, the one that bears the absent but insistent "excessive mark" of the father and the one that is the source of our

reading the *Fragments* through the *frottis* of the story of Tobit and Tobias, is *Au tableau noir*, appearing on page 49 of the French text.

The one passage that Barthes quotes in *Les Secrets de la princesse de Cadignan*, the one that concerns Cuvier's *patte*, from which we were able to make a paleographic (restoring its context in Balzac) and mantic (revealing the context Barthes gives it in the *Fragments*) reconstruction, occurs on page 49 of the edition he uses (Pléiade, volume 6).

The reconstruction of that *patte*, both in a past (Balzac) and a future (Barthes) sense, would not be adequately carried out if it did not extend to the other Balzacian text that is sufficiently important to be listed (and listed first, thanks to Barthes's mastery of the not-so-innocent use of the alphabet) among his textual sources in the *tabula gratulatoria* at the end of the *Fragments*. When it is, it reveals a *Paz* (a name that, Balzac takes pains to point out, "is pronounced like it is written," *Paç* [*FM*, 20][13]—rather like *paws* [*pattes*]), the man who concealed his love for one woman by conspicuously displaying his pretended love for another. The carnival scene that is the consummation of his efforts, in which he parades the fake mistress before the one he really loves, disguising and revealing her at the same time through this masquerade—a paradox that is recaptured in Barthes's phrase *Larvatus prodeo*, when he discusses Paz in the *Fragments* (*FDA*, 43)—is found on the same page of the *Fausse Maîtresse* (*Pléiade*, volume 2) as the *patte* in the *Secrets*, 49.

This trail of four forty-nines seems to lead us on, step by step, as if towards some discovery, as the angel once led Tobias. When we open up this page, as he broke open the fish, we find once again what insisted, through its excessive connotation, in the *RB* fragment on induction: the *prodeo* ("I advance") of Barthes's Latin phrase, the step (*pas*), the dance in which Paz and his pretended mistress are engaged, is the *galop*.

> At four a.m. on the Mardi Gras of the year 1838, the countess, enveloped in a black domino and seated on the steps of one of the amphitheaters of this Babylonian hall . . . saw defile before her in the *galop* Thaddeus [Paz] as Robert Macaire conducting the horsewoman in the costume of a female savage, her head adorned with plumes like a horse of a coronation carriage. (*FM*, 49)

Malaga,[14] the fake mistress, is a circus equestrienne, "who knows how to dismount and remount a horse at the fastest gallop . . . to stand tiptoe and then fall sitting on the horse's back, still at a gallop" (*FM*, 38). These are Paz's words, as he proclaims to the woman he really loves

that he adores his mistress for these very qualities. On both occasions the *galop* is for the reader of the story the sign of what is false about Paz's mistress. It is inseparable from Malaga; it masks, and yet displays, incarnating both terms of Barthes's carnivalesque phrase *Larvatus prodeo.*

We can recall another dance, one not so apparently charged with meaning: Werther's first dance with Charlotte—the day he first saw here, when he fell in love. But that scene of a country ball conceals (and yet can reveal) evidence for another reading, one that will enable us to account for yet another train of coincidences. Werther has been waiting for some time to dance with Charlotte; the opportunity at last comes when it is time to dance a rather difficult step. Although it is customary for a lady's escort to perform this dance with her, Charlotte's partner is a poor dancer, and so she asks Werther. Knowing how to dance is thus of the utmost importance for Werther; knowing what they danced has its importance for us as well (just as it did in the case of Balzac's *bal masqué*):

> "Who is Albert," I said to Lotte, "if it is not impertinent to ask?" She was on the point of answering when we had to separate to form the big eight, and it seemed to me her brow looked pensive as we crossed each other. "Why should I keep it from you? . . . Albert is a worthy man, to whom I'm as good as engaged." (*W*, 16)

Thunder and lightning bring the dance to a premature conclusion. The shutters are closed, to allay the fears of the ladies. Charlotte proposes the distraction of a game, arranging the chairs in a circle and giving instructions.

> "We'll play counting," said Lotte. "Now pay attention. I'll go around the circle from right to left, and you count off in turn, each saying the next number in the series, and it must go like wildfire, and anyone who hesitates or makes a mistake gets his ears boxed." (*W*, 17)

It is important not only to know how to dance but also how to count. If we pay attention to what they are dancing (*die grosse Achte*, a great figure eight that traces the plot of the novel: an encounter, a separation during which Albert intervenes, and a reunion tempered by the knowledge that they can never unite) and if we count, then we will come across the beginning of an intriguing coincidence—that Werther is an epistolary novel composed of eighty-eight letters.

If Werther is paying attention and is counting, then he will see that when he saw Charlotte for the very first time, framed in the doorway of her home and surrounded by her brothers and sisters, he was being invited, having been granted the status of cousin, to be the eighth in

that intimate circle—since he tells us there were six children. And, finally, this might constitute for him a clue—in addition to the others we have already seen—that he was following a path traced by an Apocryphal text, since for Sarah, Tobias was the eighth.

Yet not quite finally, for Barthes's *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*, which he tells us is based on a "regular reading" of *Werther*, is, as we know, made up of eighty chapters, "figures." And if we count once more, we will find that the *tabula gratulatoria* of all its sources—friends (nine), *Werther*, authors (sixty-nine), and a group of composers, a painter, and a film-maker (nine)—numbers eighty-eight entries. Goethe's novel, Barthes's *mandala* for this text, stands metonymically for all its "pretexts," and whether one takes *Werther* or the entire *tabula*, of which it forms a principal part, the *Fragments* exemplify the formula 88→80.

Baptismal fonts were customarily octagonal, the number eight signifying rebirth, its form having the shape of the mathematical symbol for eternity, tracing the path of an eternal return. There is an 8 missing in 88→80, room for another twist, space for the reader to turn, to handle, even to pinch, the text.

The round that is traditionally sung when the *furet* is made to run suggests another kind of circular model for the relation that the *Fragments* allows for between reader and text. Each singer sings the same melodic line, each following the track of his predecessor. The voices never conclude at the same time (and this distinguishes it from a fugue, where various adjustments make the conclusion musically satisfying for each line), but would go on forever in search of a resolution.

Werther's journey through life is cut short by his suicide. We have seen, however, that the road he takes has been traveled before. Though he travels it alone, from the perspective allowed us we can see that he accompanies Tobias at a distance, like a voice in a round or a canon, one measure or more behind the first; and consequently when that first voice comes to the end of its melodic line, his own end is premature. When Daniel d'Arthez ran alongside Michel Chrestien, together they traced a similar parallel to the princess's carriage; the step Paz and his partner execute is also a round dance, "le galop, cette ronde du Sabbat" (*FM*, 49).

And the pleasure of a canon lies not in any one of its lines but in the way they are combined—reunited, as Barthes writes of the lover, the reader, he seeks:

> out of all these points . . . I would form a perfect figure: my other would be born.

1. *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*, translated by Richard Howard as *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), hereafter *FDA. Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*, likewise translated by Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), will appear as *RB*. References are to these translations. Occasionally it will be necessary to refer to the French text; these page numbers will follow a semicolon.

2. *Le Plaisir du texte*, translated by Richard Miller as *The Pleasure of the Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975).

3. My translation of *κνλινδεῖται μὲν πανταχοῦ*, *Phaedrus* 275e (Greek text in *Phèdre*, ed. L. Robin [Paris: Société "Les Belles Lettres," 1933]).

4. Noted also, but without reference to the father, by Alain Rey in "Le Corps aux miroirs," p. 1017.

5. *Sade, Fourier, Loyola.*

6. Barthes is quoting Baudelaire (*Hymne*, in the *Oeuvres complètes*, p. 146).

7. Ferdinand de Saussure, acknowledged in France as the father of modern linguistics, secretly compiled instances of what he took to be hidden names, "anagrammatized" in Latin poetry. See J. Starobinski, *Les Mots sous les mots.*

8. *Critique et vérité.*

9. *The Sufferings of Young Werther.*

10. *Goethe and the Novel.*

11. *The New English Bible.*

12. *Les Secrets de la princesse de Cadignan*, p. 26; hereafter *SP.*

13. *La Fausse Maîtresse.*

14. Whose name is an amalgam, artificial construction *par excellence.*

4

Coda: Wolf, Pirsig, Barth

As the reader may have guessed, this montage of Fowles, Irving, and Barthes found its origin in the *Fragments'* scumble, the cover's glaze whose appeal was such that it seemed to call out for gloss, even though its authorship was unknown. Of doubtful canonicity in that sense, its presence nevertheless insisted, demanded some response. What resulted seems in turn to have been predicted by the words with which Barthes spoke of the image—Gradiva walking, Charlotte cutting, Groucha polishing—that compels love at first sight:

> I cannot get over having had this good fortune: to meet what matches my desire; or to have taken this huge risk: instantly to submit to an unknown image (and the entire reconstructed scene functions like the sumptuous montage of an ignorance). (*FDA*, 194)

Not knowing who put the Apocryphal *frottis* on the cover of the book (nor, if it was the Barthes who wrote its contents, why—the hands? the sexually ambiguous embrace? the transparent, half-slit sleeve?), ignorant as Tobit's son, I set out in search of what was vaguely promised, unaware that I would find a way to dissolve the opacity of that glaze in a reading that would correspond so extravagantly to the story it represented: the surface I was scratching here, as the scales fell from older eyes, would become, eventually, the thing it had been in the very beginning, indecorous bird-dribble (*158PM*, 140). But before it did, the journey would have lengthened far beyond any original intent, extending to texts not heard of, to some not yet written, its direction, and most

certainly the impulse to its completion, furnished by that partially uncovered image. The last example Barthes cites when he writes, in the passage alluded to above, of the image that makes one fall in love comes closest to the situation that his cover generates; for while the other two find echoes in the story behind the cover's scumble (as I argued in the last chapter), the third finds its counterpart in the *frottis* itself: the Wolf-Man's fascination is something the reader who falls under the cover's spell can also experience. Speaking of the deep impression Groucha makes on Freud's famous client, Barthes recalls that she was polishing [*frotter*] the floor and that the work-posture somehow guarantees the image's innocence. She wasn't really trying to seduce him, but, unaware of his presence, was engaged in the most ordinary kind of work—though it would be wrong to conclude that he must have simply read into it some private obsession, for it is according to Barthes the innocence itself (as the *frottis* put on Barthes's book may be innocent of all but the most commonplace associations—hands, a mysterious touching union, see-through sleeves) that caught his eye, something in the occasion (as there is something in the opportunity the cover's glaze presents that can seduce the reader into imagining that its finishing touch leaves the book unfinished) that made him think that the object of his gaze was in some way accessible, open, available.

The reading of Barthes just presented here is in fact a reading of that space between the *frottis* of the angelic embrace and the text that follows it; its text is that space. Its occasion prompted the preceding readings of Irving and Fowles, and that it did is perhaps as much a result of chance as William Legrand's discovery of the coded instructions on the underside of his scarab drawing in Edgar Poe's illustration of how one can, to borrow Polonius' words, by indirections find directions out (the *Gold-Bug*'s protagonist found his way to the treasure buried beneath the skull on the tree only by stumbling across the truth, and then only because the drawing he himself had made, to give the narrator a picture of the insect of the title, happened to coincide with the outline of a skull traced invisibly on the other side [GB, 59]).[1] By a singular coincidence, the kind of gloss that is visible in Barthes through the Wolf-Man's eyes was added to the cover of Irving's hero's best-selling book, a finishing touch that would irretrievably color its readers' image of the text, by another Wolf: "A kind of wet finish glazed the photograph" that Garp's editor John Wolf put on the front of *The World According to Bensenhaver* (*WAG*, 338). He put it there without the author's permission, and in fact made certain he wouldn't see it until it was too late to change it by sealing the advance copy of the front cover in an envelope, and that envelope in another, and by not giving

it to him until just before Garp got on a plane for Europe. "Blown up in black and white, with grains as fat as flakes of snow, was a picture of an ambulance unloading at a hospital"—a small, covered body; futility in the unhurried attendants' faces. The wet-looking glaze, its graininess, "and the fact that this accident appeared to have happened on a rainy night" gave it the look of a cheap newspaper shot, "any catastrophe . . . *any* small death." Garp could only think of Walt; his readers, once they saw the other photo, the one on the back, would only be able to think of the disaster that did in fact give rise to the novel: the novelist and his sons, pictured in happier days, with the caption, "T. S. GARP WITH HIS CHILDREN (BEFORE THE ACCIDENT)" (*WAG*, 338–39). Such exploitation for the sake of sales was as distressing to Garp as Wolf knew it would be; T. S. sat in the plane "feeling disgust at the people he imagined buying the book," and at himself for having written a book that could lend itself to such an appeal (*WAG*, 340). He had only been given the first photograph; had he seen the second and "the jacket-flap description of his novel and his life, at that time, he might very well have taken the next plane back to New York" (*WAG*, 339). What John Wolf did, however, was not only commercially effective ("Years later, Helen would remark that the success of *The World According to Bensenhaver* lay entirely in the book jacket" [*WAG*, 328]) but, in a larger perspective than he could know, critically accurate: the wet finish glaze of the photograph that was itself a gloss on the book, Wolf's paternal[2] gesture that would assure its success in the world, lays stress on an aspect of the accident that had already held our attention as an insistent but necessary detail from the older, Apocryphal story. The moist glaze and heavy obscuring grain ("as fat as flakes of snow") interfere with our view of the scene, and with Garp's, making it resemble blurred, not entirely recognizable newsprint, and contribute to one's notion of the weather ("the accident appeared to have happened on a rainy night")—but what Wolf's *frottis* also does is to bring back to our attention, and possibly Garp's, the actual cause of the accident, the sleet-frosted shroud of a windshield that Garp had refused to scrape clean and that ensured he wouldn't see the car parked at the end of his driveway.

(A lycanthropic reading of not only Barthes and Irving, but also Fowles, is possible; even in the latter one is constrained, in the case of *Daniel Martin*, to see things through the disguise of a wolf's eyes: the author projects himself into the novel in the name of the hero of the novel his hero will write. "You can't use your own name in a novel," Jenny McNeil tells Daniel. So why not a name like S. Wolfe, from the back of the phone book? " 'As in lone. But with an *e*.' She runs her

finger down a list of names. 'That's it. *S*. You can't get more wriggly than that' " [*DM*, 17]. The letters of Fowles's name flow through the surface of his characters' imagination like light through a magnifying loupe [with an *e*], coming out on the other side twisted and rearranged—where the degree of blur and the reversal of the image depend on how closely you look.

(Though a wolf too often announced is not always believed, this parenthesis could be stretched to include one more variation on our noncanonical theme seen through eyes that become increasingly wolflike:

(Robert Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*,[3] which a few years back enjoyed an American popular and critical success akin to that of *Garp*, is about a son who heals his father's affliction at the end of a journey whose itinerary undergoes a considerable but rewarding modification because of a certain Sarah, and along which an accompanying ghost goes too, one who knows the route because he has taken it before—a familiar story by now, but one that appears in one more guise, in a variation on the original that inverts the relationships of father, son, and ghost. Whereas in Tobit the persons of father, son, and angel were fairly distinct [through there is reason to believe the resurgent fish is, at the moment of its sudden appearance, in some measure the father], G. E. Gerould, reading Tobit in the context of the *Grateful Dead* stories, suggests a secular interpretation of the Apocryphal tale: that Tobias's traveling companion was not there as a result of divine intervention but was a function of the story itself, being the ghost of the man whom Tobit buried, aiding the son in gratitude for the father's kindness.[4] Gerould's thesis is that Tobit, which we have seen as a theme whose variations recur in Fowles, Irving, and Barthes, is itself a variant on *The Grateful Dead*, though in that case it would be a variant whose own existence preceded the earliest known instance of its original,[5] an interesting but perhaps not totally impossible state of affairs: that the inner logic of Tobit [to borrow Hofstadter's phrase] is such that it compels some of its subsequent variations to make the original that they imitate look like a variation on themselves. While the Raphaels that influence Irving's Trumper and T. S. Garp are definitely not ghosts but real people, even Ralphs, Fowles's *Daniel Martin* makes use of the possibility that the guiding angel may be a ghost by making him Anthony's; and since in Anthony, whose appearance coincides with the father's death, Daniel saw his father's spirit [*DM*, 71], the "familiar compound ghost" who leads Daniel to Jane [*DM*, 604] is in fact the ghost of the ghost of the father.

(Pirsig's ghost is, like *Daniel Martin*'s, a version of the father; it is the father's former self, Phaedrus, a ghost who returns to haunt the

hero [who is the father] because, though disintegrated by electric shock treatment, he was never given a proper burial:

> In the first grey of the morning what Chris said about his Indian friend's grandmother came back to me, clearing something up. She said ghosts appear when someone has not been buried right. That's true. He never was buried right, and that's exactly the source of the trouble. [*ZAMM*, 63]

Chris is the son, young enough to ride behind his father on a motorcycle trip west across America—so that although, as in the Apocryphal narrative, the father makes the son [who is at times reluctant] make the journey, he goes with him this time. The traveling companion, full of instructions as before, is now no longer a substitute for the father but the father himself. Yet the father bears within him a ghostly double, his past self who when he was Phaedrus was seized with a passion for Quality, and it was in the course of his search for the meaning and origin of this elusive concept that he went insane.

(Along the journey west, he passes through places that he recognizes because Phaedrus has been there before. As they continue, the trip becomes more and more a retracing of the intellectual journey that he had made when he was Phaedrus, and his ghost's threat to reappear becomes increasingly real. That earlier journey, the search for Quality, had been set in motion by something a certain Sarah had said, a "seed crystal," a sentence said almost not quite seriously, like "a grain of dust or . . . a sudden scratch or tap on the surrounding glass" that will cause a supersaturated solution to begin to crystallize. Pausing by his office at a midwestern university where he was teaching freshman composition, this Sarah, an elderly lady classics teacher in her last year before retirement, said, almost teasingly, "I hope you are teaching Quality to your students"—

> and within a matter of a few months, growing so fast you could almost *see* it grow, came an enormous, intricate, highly structured mass of thought, formed as if by magic. [*ZAMM*, 175]

What he had been looking for already, in his dissatisfaction with the traditional approach to teaching English composition—a subject that he realized was "undoubtedly the most unprecise, unanalytic, amorphous area in the entire Church of Reason"—in which it seemed that rhetoric had become a set of effects one added after the fact, "*pasted on* to the writing after the writing was all done" [*ZAMM*, 170], now suddenly began to assume a more definite shape, crystallizing around a single word, Quality, and the search for its definition.

> "Is Quality a part of Greek thought?" he had asked.
> "Quality is *every* part of Greek thought," she had said, and he had thought about this. Sometimes under her old-ladyish way of speaking he thought he detected a secret canniness, as though like a Delphic oracle she said things with hidden meanings, but he could never be sure. [*ZAMM*, 328–29]

The search led him to ancient Greece, Sarah's academic specialty, and in particular to pre-Socratic rhetoric, for which the person of Phaedrus, Socrates' foil in the dialogue of that name, became in his eyes an exemplary figure. "Did I ever talk about an individual named Phaedrus?" he will later ask of a friend on the motorcycle journey west. "He was an ancient Greek . . . a rhetorician . . . a 'composition major' of his time." Phaedrus and his fellow rhetoricians were vilified in Plato's writings as Sophists, and these "first teachers in the history of the Western world" have stood condemned all this time, he came to believe, with no one to come to their defense. "The Church of Reason . . . was founded on their graves. . . . And when you dig deep into its foundations you come across ghosts" [*ZAMM*, 166]. The Sophists' bones were buried "so deep and with such ceremoniousness and such unction and such evil that only a madman centuries later could discover the clues needed to uncover them, and see with horror what had been done" [*ZAMM*, 376]. Phaedrus, who did not at that time call himself by that name but whose real name is never given, took himself to be that madman.

(In his subsequent study of philosophy at the University of Chicago, in a department living in the aftermath of the Great Books Program, he encountered the *Phaedrus* of Plato. Something akin to the inner click that Sarah's question had earlier caused must have happened here, for his adoption of Phaedrus' name dates from the experience of reading this text in class, a setting that becomes a battleground for a conflict of interpretations. The Chairman, teaching the class, maintains that Socrates' description of the soul as a charioteer guiding two horses, a white and a black one, is the absolute truth ["Socrates has sworn to the Gods that it is the truth!" (*ZAMM*, 383]); Pirsig's hero raises his hand to say that all this is just a fiction, "an analogy," taking the text as his witness [referring evidently to 246a, where Socrates says that only a god could tell what the nature of the soul really is, "but what it resembles, that a man might tell. . . . Let it be likened to the union of powers in a team of winged steeds and their winged charioteer"].[^] Earlier in the class, he had earned the teacher's approval with an insight into the meaning of the name of Socrates' companion:

> "I believe that in this dialogue the person of Phaedrus is characterized as a *wolf*."
>
> . . . "Yes," the Chairman says, and a gleam in his eye shows he now recognizes who his bearded assailant is. "*Phaedrus* in Greek does mean 'wolf.' That's a very acute observation." He begins to recover his composure. "Proceed." [*ZAMM*, 381]

Phaedrus the wolf "is carried away by Socrates' discourse on love and is tamed," but Pirsig's Phaedrus, though impressed by the dialogue's poetry and power ["It is an immortal dialogue, strange and puzzling at first, but then hitting you harder and harder, like truth itself" (*ZAMM*, 380–81)], is not so tamed; for he senses in the *Phaedrus*, particularly in Socrates' second speech on love, the palinode that he gives to atone for his earlier, blasphemous one, "a faint odor of hypocrisy. The speech is not an end in itself, but is being used to condemn that same affective domain of understanding it makes its rhetorical appeal to" [*ZAMM*, 378]. The same could be said, although Pirsig's hero doesn't, about the dialogue itself; for it closes with Socrates' notorious condemnation of writing [that, as Thamus told Theuth, it is not an aid to memory but to forgetfulness, the mere and possibly misleading image of speech (274d–275e)] yet it is, perhaps more than anything else, a written text.

(Refusing to be tamed by the dialogue, and assuming a wolflike ferocity and cunning as he prepares to take on the Chairman, Pirsig's Phaedrus is truer to his name than was Socrates', though he only comes to have this name because Phaedrus first had it. "When a shepherd goes to kill a wolf, and takes his dog to see the sport," he observes as he watches another student, who had witnessed an earlier attempt on the Chairman's part to entrap Phaedrus, turn on the teacher, "he should take care to avoid mistakes. The dog has certain relationships to the wolf the shepherd may have forgotten" [*ZAMM*, 384]. If Sarah's question about Quality was the seed crystal that caused his own uneasiness with the traditional teaching of rhetoric to crystallize around an all-consuming quest for an understanding of that word, his encounter with the *Phaedrus* was the catalyst that brought on the more dangerous phase of his intellectual voyage. His eventual madness seems to find its origin in his growing identification with Socrates' fellow traveler along that path beyond Athens' walls ["Phaedrus meets Socrates," as our Phaedrus retells the story, "*who knows only the ways of the city* [his emphasis], and leads him into the country" (*ZAMM*, 382)]; he becomes more Phaedrus than Phaedrus. Such an implied claim on the part of a latecoming variation of being stronger than the original it

imitates is one that we might well have reason to consider when reading Fowles, Irving, and Barthes in their relation to Tobit. At the risk of imitating Phaedrus' projection of his own quest onto Plato's dialogue, we might also feel a crystallizing jolt—a tap on the glass that brings everything together, allowing an intricate structure to emerge from the relationships, until now invisible, floating in the text—through a similar coincidence of names, wondering if Pirsig did not choose his names with the same care that his hero attributes to Plato: reading Pirsig as his Phaedrus reads Plato, ought we to see our Sarah in his?

(The outline of the Apocryphal tale is indeed traceable here, in this story of a long journey at the end of which father and son are at last reunited, the son recognizing in the stranger who has been making him take this trip his real father, the ghostly Phaedrus who was killed but came back at the end, becoming more unburied as the journey progressed, and ultimately responsible for guiding them there in the first place. Early in the book Pirsig's hero has a sense that this is true:

> There, out in the window in the dark—this cold wind crossing the road into the trees, the leaves shimmering flecks of moonlight—there is no question about it, Phaedrus saw all of this. What he was doing here I have no idea. Why he came this way I will probably never know. But he has been here, steered us onto this strange road, has been with us all along. [*ZAMM*, 36]

Like Tobit, who unwittingly invoked the angel's guidance ["and may his angel attend you" (Tobit 5:16)] and like Barthes's *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*, whose angel on the cover implies an Apocryphal guidance that its text secretly elaborates in the richness of its relation to Goethe, to Balzac, and to Barthes's own life, Pirsig's invocation of the *Phaedrus* makes it possible to see connections between his text and Plato's beyond those made explicit in the novel—*Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, whose title announces the union of entities as far apart as A and Z, seems almost to arise out of the conjunction of these two texts, *Phaedrus* and Tobit, one explicitly present in the novel and the other not, neither of which could reflect an awareness of the other's existence. Socrates' palinode, for example, over whose truth value Pirsig's hero and the Chairman clash, has at its origin a ghost: Socrates says he is imitating Stesichorus, who wrote a palinode to recover his sight, taken from him by the Dioscuri in retaliation for his first poem's defamation of their sister Helen [*Phaedrus*, 243ab]. What Stesichorus did to change his story was simply to declare that it was not Helen who was seduced by Paris and thereby became the cause of the Trojan War, but a ghost that was such a perfect likeness no one knew the difference. The very issue over which Pirsig's Phaedrus

and the Chairman fought was a similar one, whether Socrates' palinodic speech, with its description of the soul as two horses and a charioteer, was the truth or merely an image. To say that writing is just the "image" of speech, as Socrates would later say in the dialogue, is to give it the same name as Helen's ghost, an *eidôlon* [in the *Republic*, 586c]. But Pirsig's hero's growing awareness along the shared transcontinental journey that Phaedrus has been there before him ["and then in the brillance of the next lightning flash that farmhouse . . . that windmill . . . oh, my God, he's *been* here! . . . that is *his* road" (*ZAMM*, 28)] can induce an even stronger experience of *dêjà vu* in that reader who is led by Pirsig's intriguing use of Plato to go back and read the *Phaedrus*. For not only is it a dialogue about a ghost [a phantom that haunts the margin of that text in a suggestive way, almost invisibly, lending itself as an allegory for the nature of writing], but it is also the story about a shared journey along a path where something remarkable, and perhaps a little terrifying, happened long before:

> PHAEDRUS: Tell me, Socrates, isn't it somewhere about here that they say Boreas seized Orithyia from the river? [229b]

The value of this anecdote, hidden near the beginning of the *Phaedrus*, for understanding the dialogue has grown, or ought to, since two fairly recent glosses: one, in Jacques Derrida's "La Pharmacie de Platon,"[7] that the fact that it was while Orithyia was, as Socrates tells it, "at play with Pharmacia" that she "was blown by a gust of Boreas down from the rocks" [229c] prefigures the danger Socrates will himself be in when he plays with the *pharmakon*, the "drug," as Socrates calls it, of writing [in the form of the speech of Lysias' that Phaedrus reads aloud to him, and then in the speech that Socrates composes in response to it, an imitation that is presented as an improvement on the original, while still adhering to Lysias' theme—that the nonlover's advances should be preferred to the lover's]; the other, in Léon Robin's note to his edition of the *Phaedrus* concerning the topography of the dialogue,[8] that Socrates' answer to Phaedrus' question about where it was that Orithyia met her fate locates the event farther along the river Ilissus ["where you cross to the sanctuary of Agra" (229c)]—precisely at the spot where Socrates himself will almost cross it, but will hold back at the last minute in obedience to his inner voice:

> SOCRATES: At the moment when I was about to cross the river, dear friend, there came to me my familiar divine sign—which always checks me when on the point of doing something or other—and all at once I seemed to hear a voice, forbidding me to leave the spot until I had made atonement for some offense to heaven. [242bc]

It is at this point, at the very place where Orithyia was swept away by Boreas' nordic blast, that Socrates suddenly realizes that he is likewise in danger of being overly inspired, "enthused" [*enthousiasô* (241e)], caught up in the dangerous eloquence of his own discourse. He breaks off his speech in midstream, the one that he had been composing in response to the one that he had heard Phaedrus read, and begins to speak of Stesichorus, of his blindness and recovery, and of his own need to atone for the speech that imitated Lysias' with one modeled after the truer poet ["truer" even than Homer, who never grasped the reason for *his* blindness (243a)], Stesichorus.

(Pirsig's hero's problem is that he had recanted too, had taken back what he had as Phaedrus said, had abandoned that lonely journey toward Quality in order to gain release from the mental ward to which it had led him:

> What I am is a heretic who's recanted, and thereby in everyone's eye saved his soul. Everyone's eyes but one. . . . If I hadn't turned on him I'd still be there, but he was true to what he believed right to the end. That's the difference between us, and Chris knows it. And that's the reason why sometimes I feel he's the reality and I'm the ghost. [*ZAMM*, 396]

Socrates' daimonic inner voice spoke at the water's edge, at a particular spot haunted by an earlier event; Pirsig's hero's ghostly former self, which from time to time along the journey west seemed to respond to the stimulus of a familiar place, threatening to break out of its half-buried state, reemerges definitively at the end, at the water's edge. Fighting an urge to run for the cliff overlooking the Pacific, he confronts and tries to comfort his son:

> *Everything is all right now, Chris.*
> That's not my voice. [*ZAMM*, 401]

It is Phaedrus' voice, and henceforth [for we are at the end of the novel] his real one, its emergence signaling the end of the journey—a journey that was threatening to end at "the bottom of the ocean" [*ZAMM*, 393, 400].

> After a while he wails, "Why did you leave us?"
> *When?*
> "At the hosptial!"
> *There was no choice. The police prevented it.*
> "Wouldn't they let you out?"
> *No.*
> "Well then, why wouldn't you open the door?"
> *What door?*
> "The glass door!" [*ZAMM*, 402]

What Chris is remembering is the moment when he came with his mother to visit his father at the hospital, a scene of which Phaedrus has his own memory, in a dream that recurs at night along the journey. In his nightmare the glass door of the mental ward becomes the transparent door of a coffin. "Not a coffin, a sarcophagus. I am in an enormous vault, dead, and they are paying their last respects." Chris motions for him to open the door. "He wants me to tell him, perhaps, what death is like." But Phaedrus can't open it; he can only call out:

> "CHRIS!" I shout through the door. "I'LL SEE YOU!" . . . I hear Chris's voice, "Where?" faint and distant. . . . "AT THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEAN!!" [*ZAMM*, 267]

The rendezvous—father and son reunited in a watery grave—is kept, almost; that it isn't, though father and son do get as far as the ocean's edge, is due to Chris's saving intervention. He refuses to accept his father's self-diagnosis; prompted perhaps by the sudden return of his father's original voice, he is ready to affirm that his father was never really insane, that the only problem is that his father's real self, Phaedrus, has been hidden away all this time and that he wants him back.

> Now the fog suddenly lifts and I see the sun on his face makes his expression open in a way I've never seen it before. . . .
> "Were you really insane?"
> Why should he ask that?
> *No!*
> Astonishment hits. But Chris's eyes sparkle.
> "I knew it," he says. . . .
> I haven't been carrying him at all. He's been carrying *me*!
> "I *knew* it," he said. It keeps tugging on the line, saying my big problem may not be as big as I think it is, because the answer is right in front of me. For God's sake relieve him of his burden! Be one person again! [*ZAMM*, 403–4]

How did it happen? How did Chris's father become whole again? How did the story come to know it had reached the end? One looks for some sign, something new enough to constitute a break with the immediate past, that indefinitely prolonged journey, something familiar enough to make it possible to recognize the destination, now at hand. The ocean, of course, sets a natural limit to their westward course; it is also the place where Phaedrus, when he was insane, said he'd meet his son. But they turn south at that point, and could have continued indefinitely; and father and son do at last meet somewhere short of the ocean's floor. There must be something else, and there is, something both strange and, ultimately, familiar: the very first thing one sees in that penultimate but final [in terms of plot] chapter, the one piece that was missing in

the crystallization that will allow one to see the Apocryphal Sarah in Pirsig's, the guiding angel in the ghost who "steered us onto this strange road," and Tobias in the son with the power to heal his father:

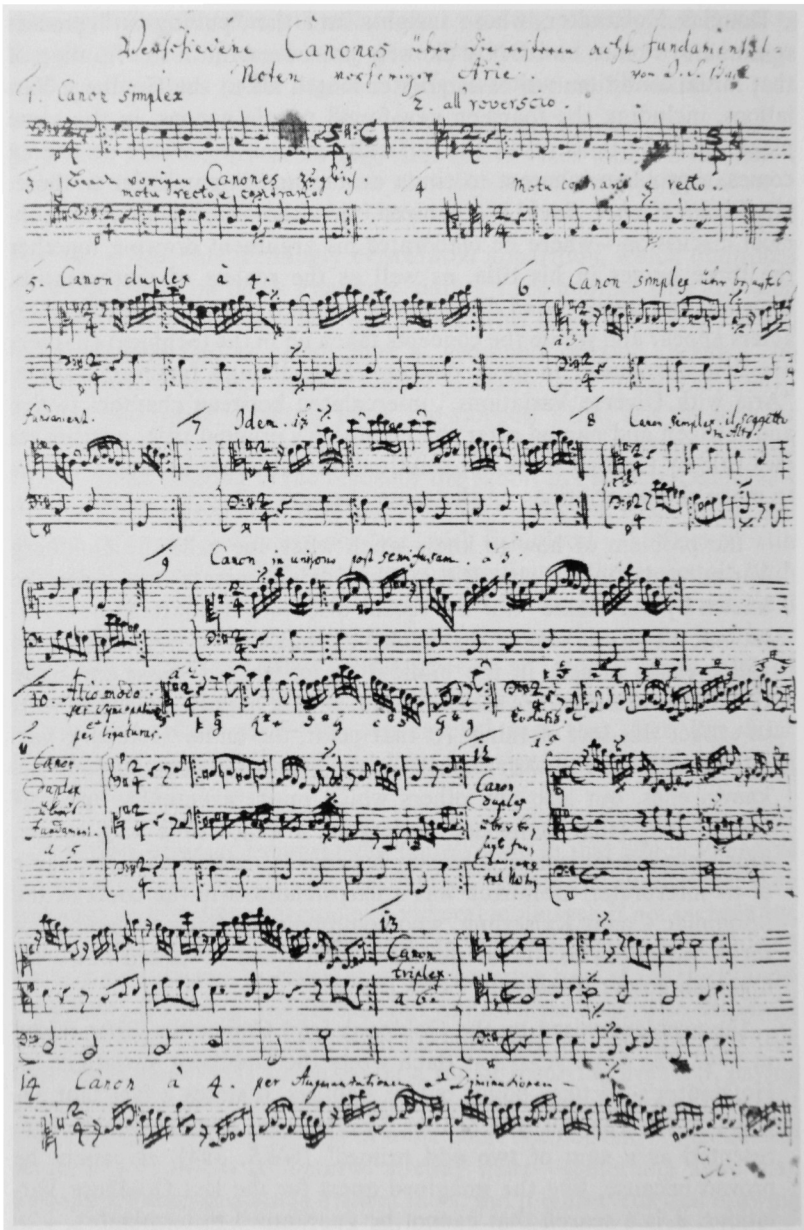
> In the morning I'm stopped by the appearance of a green slug on the ground. It's about six inches long, three-quarters inch wide and soft and almost rubbery and covered with slime like some internal organ of an animal. [*ZAMM*, 393]

Not yet a fish, this seemingly eviscerated apparition, which multiplies to fill the area and block Phaedrus' path ["I see another slug and then another—my God, the place is crawling with them" (*ZAMM*, 394)], will later fade into an atmosphere of genuinely oceanic viscera ["the ocean smell of rotting organic matter is heavy here" (*ZAMM*, 396)]. It gives him pause, a halting jolt ["I'm stopped"] that sets the tone for what will become the last day of the journey. Like the woman Jane and Daniel found floating in the reeds, or the rabbit in Fishacre Daniel saw die and then eviscerated with the knife he would use to carve his signature, or Irving's cobblestones "wet with fish-blood . . . flecked with intestines" [*158PM*, 138] whose residue prefigures the spermatic bird-dribble that will obstruct a father's vision by staining the windshield [as a white glaze of windshield ice will blind another father in a later Irving book], this last-minute emergence of an internal organ, with its accompanying odor of oceanic decay, testifies to the power of the accompanying older story—the Apocryphal text that, like Phaedrus' ghost, seems, especially now, to have been guiding Pirsig's traveling companions all along.)

A certain sense of astonishment (surely akin to that which Phaedrus experienced—in the story just recounted—before the sudden and then suddenly proliferating spectacle of visceral molluscs), if not incredulity, would occur to any reader of Fowles, Irving, and Barthes who realized the common ground, as insistent as the recurring bass of the thirty (now forty-four) Goldberg Variations, that unites these otherwise disparate works in ways of which even their authors may be unaware. It is true that one is more likely to encounter a run of recurring events if, having already seen a few, one remembers to look for more; it is also true that the realization in question may at some point become one in the musical sense, a working-out of material already there—something more than a simple notation of already evident facts. But it is also true that drawing that part of the music which is not set down out of that part which is, Dowland's way of describing the solution of enigma canons, has been the goal proposed from the beginning for this set of Apocryphal variations.

Douglas Hofstadter, whose insights into the "pulling-out" process common to canons and DNA likewise proved useful in the framing of that initial ambition, writes at greater length about the Goldberg Variations, including the fourteen new-found puzzle canons, in the same place where he talks about the difficulty of knowing where an ending comes, a problem inherent to circle canons and in particular to these. His *Gödel, Escher, Bach*[9] is organized into alternating chapters of technical discussion—where he elaborates his argument drawing together the three names in his title, as well as the realms of mathematics, drawing, and music—and dialogues in which a cast of recurring characters appear and where the concepts taken up in the technical chapters are first introduced in more down-to-earth, though fanciful, fashion. "Aria with Diverse Variations," intercalated between chapters twelve and thirteen and named after the Goldberg's original title, justifies its own title by treating three apparently different issues in such a way as to make them variations on the same theme:

> the problem of how to know when what one calls the Goldberg Variations is finally what will at some indeterminate future date be known by that name—for the recent discovery of fourteen new variations, all puzzle canons, has raised the question of when the canon will ever be closed, in the biblical sense: what if some day more Goldberg variations are found? If that should happen, "we shall start to expect this sort of thing. At that point, the name 'Goldberg Variations' will start to shift slightly in meaning, to include not only the known ones, but also any others which might eventually turn up" [*GEB*, 393] (that name had undergone a major shift long before, ever since the collection somehow became associated with the name of its interpreter. Goldbach was a harpsichordist in the court of the insomniac Count Kaiserling, who commissioned Bach to compose a set of variations to fill his sleepless nights, and rewarded him with a golden goblet filled with Louis d'or),
>
> the problem raised by the Goldbach (*sic*) Conjecture (first raised in 1742, the same year that Bach wrote the Goldberg Variations, as Hofstadter's Tortoise points out to Achilles, it states a fact that appears to be true but unprovable: "Every even number can be represented as a sum of two odd primes" [*GEB*, 394]. It cannot be proved because, like the imagined quest for the last Goldberg Variations, it is a search that cannot be guaranteed to terminate),
>
> and the problem of how to avoid letting the reader know ahead of time when the book he is reading is going to end: the physicality of the book tends to give it away, the Tortoise points out; he suggests



Johann Sebastian Bach's hand-annotated fourteen canons based on the first eight notes of the aria of the Goldberg Variations (Cote MS 17669, Bibliothèque Nationale). Reproduced by permission of the Chef de Conservation du Département de Musique, Bibliothèque Nationale, and Editions Salabert.

some extra printed pages at the end that would be part of the story but would "serve to conceal the exact location of the end from a cursory glance, or from the feel of the book." But Achilles notes that what is printed on these pages would have to resemble not only normal printed pages but also the pages of the real story itself, for even a cursory glance at one story will often be enough to tell it apart from another. The Tortoise replies that that's what he's always had in mind, a "post-ending ending" (like the quodlibet at the end of the Goldberg Variations, which was also called, earlier in Hofstadter's dialogue, a post-ending ending; the thirtieth and final—until Christoph Wolff's discovery—variation, it introduces "extraneous musical ideas having little to do with the original Theme—in fact, two German folk tunes" [*GEB*, 392]. But now it appears that this post-ending ending is followed by another, as the number of variations has increased from thirty to forty-four) that would follow the real ending without a break and look like a continuation yet be in reality "utterly unrelated to the true theme." But, Achilles objects, if the resemblance is close enough to work, it may be too close, and the reader won't be able to find the ending. What if, however, one could effect the transition from genuine story to extra pages "in such a way that, by sufficiently assiduous inspection of the text, an intelligent reader will be able to detect where one leaves off and the other begins"? One could plant certain clues:

> *Tortoise:* Such as a sudden shift of letter frequencies or word lengths? Or a rash of grammatical mistakes?
> *Achilles:* Possibly. Or a hidden message of some sort might reveal the true end to a sufficiently assiduous reader. Who knows? One could even throw in some extraneous characters or events which are inconsistent with the spirit of the foregoing story. A naive reader would swallow the whole thing, whereas a sophisticated reader would be able to spot the dividing line exactly. (*GEB*, 403)

Hofstadter loses no time presenting the same puzzle to his readers. Shortly after this point in the conversation, Achilles makes the Tortoise a present of a certain Very Asian Gold Box, filled with Louis d'or.

> *Tortoise*: Now whatver has come over you, Achilles? Well, thank you for your outstandig generosity, and I hope you have sweet dreams about the strange Golbach Conjecture, and its Variations. Good night. (*GEB*, 404)

Suddenly there is a knock at the door. It is the police, in hot pursuit of a very gold Asian box recently stolen from the museum. Achilles leads them straight to his friend the Tortoise, trembling behind a piece of furniture, and accuses him of the crime. They take him away.

Three clues, all already described in the conversation of these apparent friends, have been given to alert the reader to the fact that he has already read past the ending without realizing it: extraneous characters (the police), events inconsistent with the spirit of the story (Achilles' treason), and a rash of typographical mistakes: what is missing from "whatver . . . outstandig . . . Golbach" signifies by its absence what it in absentia spells, the *e-n-d.*

Fowles exploits the same situation in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, though in an opposite way, informing his reader a hundred pages before the end "And so ends the story" (*FLW*, 264). This happens, by considerable coincidence, in the forty-fourth chapter; the forty-fifth, like the yet to be discovered post-forty-four Goldberg Variations that Hofstadter's Achilles predicts, opens up a whole other set of possibilities:

> And now, having brought this fiction to a thoroughly traditional ending, I had better explain that although all I have described in the last two chapters happened, it did not happen quite in the way you may have been led to believe. . . . The last few pages you have read are not what happened, but what [Charles] spent the hours between London and Exeter imagining might happen. (*FLW*, 266)

The last third of Fowles's novel thus becomes a "post-ending ending," in which the endings are multiple: chapter sixty, the penultimate, would have us believe that, despite Sarah's rough words, she does in the end forgive Charles, and that the two are united at last. But the next chapter goes back for another look at their hostile exchange and gives the story a different twist: "You have not only planted the dagger in my breast, you have delighted in twisting it," Charles had said on page 355, at the point when his anger peaked, to be followed by apologies and reconciliation. He says the same words on page 362, in the second version of the scene—but this time there is no turning back; all hope of reunion is gone.[10]

John Irving shows a similar reluctance to conclude—or perhaps the opposite, a special zeal for overkill. His *The World According to Garp* ends with an epilogue that follows all his characters to their end. Is it necessary to the story (or, like Achilles' projected fake ending, full of new characters and extraneous events)? The fact is that, like Barthes's *tabula gratulatoria*, whose presence counts (in a literal sense) in the *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*, *Garp*'s epilogue contains at least one piece of information necessary for a proper reading of the novel: Mrs. Ralph's real name (*WAG*, 421).

It seems that Hofstadter uses his post-ending sections similarly, putting information there that is not only not found before but that is also capable of changing the way his text is read. As with Barthes's *Fragments*, it calls for a closer reading than one is usually expected to give of such things as indexes and bibliographies, and it requires the reader to count (not, after all, surprising in a book on mathematics); like Irving's last-minute revelation of the name Garp could never remember (but which, in retrospect, can be seen to have been active beneath the surface in the two stories he wrote in the wake of his encounter with its bearer), it concerns the discovery of the complete version of a name. In the "Aria with Diverse Variations," itself constructed on the model of the work whose original title it borrows, Hofstadter is able to weave his voices together all the more tightly through the remarkable coincidence of the Bach Goldberg Variations' and the Goldbach Conjecture's appearing in the same year (a year that serves as the first example of a number having the Goldbach property:

> *Achilles:* Tell me—when was it that Bach wrote these celebrated variations?
> *Tortoise:* It all happened in the year 1742, when he was Cantor in Leipzig.
> *Achilles:* 1742? Hmm . . . That number rings a bell.
> *Tortoise:* It ought to, for it happens to be a rather interesting number, being a sum of two odd primes: 1729 and 13. [*GEB*, 393]).

But he wouldn't have been able to do that had it not been for a certain "fellow named Wolff" who

> heard about a special copy of the Goldberg Variations in Strasbourg. He went there to examine it, and to his surprise, on the back page, as a sort of "post-ending ending," he found these fourteen new canons, all based on the first eight notes of the theme of the Goldberg Variations. So now it is known that there are in reality forty-four Goldberg Variations, not thirty. (*GEB*, 392)

Hofstadter couldn't have made the pun on the names of the composer, the music (the performer for whom it was written, actually: like the name Irving saved for last, the real name has been displaced by a borrowed one), and the mathematician, or at least he couldn't have made it work, had it not been for Wolff's news about the reopening of the Bach canon, for it is on the now suddenly open-ended nature of the Goldberg Variations that the analogy rests. But Wolff's role may not end there—for Hofstadter, like Bach, left something to be discovered in his back pages. If the author of *Gödel, Escher, Bach* is so intrigued by the coincidence of Bach, Goldberg, and Goldbach that he constructs an imitative (in two senses) dialogue around it, why does he conceal

the fact that the discoverer of the open-ended Goldbach property and the discoverer of the reopening of the Goldberg canon have the same first name (or almost: as close as the names whose resemblance has already been called into play)? He doesn't conceal it very well, of course—only enough to let the reader think he discovered it first. Yet the two pieces of information must have already existed in the author's mind, that reader will imagine, lying there at least to the extent that they lie in the index at the end of the book, each at the top of the right-hand column on a right-hand page (there are only ten such locations, among some 1,530 entries):

> Goldbach, Christian, 394, 395
> . . . . . .
> Wolff, Christoph, 392
> (*GEB*, 765, 777)

One could echo Achilles' remark ("Chris and [the] Wolff? Hmm . . . Those names ring a bell"), but it would be more to the point to pursue the other piece of information stored in the back of this book whose last word (yet not the last: this is precisely the point) is RICERCAR (*GEB*, 742), an encouragement *to search*. Following that advice, though not knowing precisely what to look for, one might eventually begin to read seriously the other post-ending section, the bibliography—or, what would lead in the end to the same thing, one could return to the "Aria with Diverse Variations" for a closer look at the dialogue that set this train of events in motion. There, just before the Tortoise begins to speak of the possibility of a book's post-ending ending, there is mention of another, curious book that seems to be either the very book one is reading or its imagined double (or perhaps, like Phaedrus, its former self):

> *Tortoise:* Speaking of terminating and nonterminating processes, and those which hover in between, I am reminded of a friend of mine, an author, who is at work on a book.
> *Achilles:* Oh, how exciting! What is it called?
> *Tortoise: Copper, Silver, Gold: an Indestructible Metallic Alloy.* Doesn't that sound interesting?
> *Achilles:* Frankly, I'm a little confused by the title. After all, what do Copper, Silver, and Gold have to do with each other?
> [They consider other titles.]
> *Tortoise:* I'll tell my friend. He'll be delighted to have a catchier title (as will his publisher).
> *Achilles:* I'm glad. But how were you reminded of his book by our discussion?
> *Tortoise:* Ah, yes. You see, in his book there will be a Dialogue in which he wants to throw readers off by making them SEARCH for the ending.
> *Achilles:* A funny thing to want to do. How is it done?

> *Tortoise:* You've undoubtedly noticed how some authors go to so much trouble to build up great tension a few pages before the end of their stories—but a reader who is holding the book physically in his hands can FEEL that the story is about to end. (*GEB*, 402)

And he goes on to describe his prescriptions for how to keep the reader guessing until, and maybe past, the very end. The book with the problematic title that features a dialogue just like the one we're reading really exists; at least Hofstadter's bibliography would have us believe it does: between Martin Gardner and Kurt Gödel one can find

> Gebstadter, Egbert B. *Copper, Silver, Gold: An Indestructible Metallic Alloy.* Perth: Acidic Books, 1979. A formidable hodge-podge, turgid and confused—yet remarkably similar to the present work. Contains some excellent examples of indirect self-reference. Of particular interest is a reference in its well-annotated bibliography to an isomorphic, but imaginary, book. (*GEB*, 748)

It now appears that both the bibliography and the index are integral parts of Hofstadter's book, real post-ending endings in the sense the Tortoise gives that term when he speaks both of the supplemental Goldberg Variations (themselves found in a similar location, as Chris Wolff explains: "At the very end of the *Handexemplar*, on the inner side of the back cover of the edition facing the quodlibet, we find a set of fourteen enigmatic circle canons, written by Bach himself and entitled . . . 'Diverse canons on the first eight notes of the ground of the preceding aria' . . . ")[11] and of the pages at the end of a book that make the reader wonder where the end of the book really is. The fiction and the play of coincidence of the preceding chapters (or divisions, of which there are forty-two: an introduction, twenty chapters, and twenty-one intercalated dialogues) are continued and developed in these last two sections, with the result that *Gödel, Escher, Bach* is divided into as many functioning parts as Bach's Goldberg Variations. That there are now forty-four of these variations is important for Hofstadter's juxtaposition of their composition with the contemporaneous event of the Goldbach Conjecture: their present number stands as a sterling (or golden) example of "terminating and nonterminating processes, and those which hover in between." A measure of the importance of this association in *Gödel, Escher, Bach* (as well as another example of what is meant by its insistent RICERCAR) is the fact that the isomorphic but imaginary book to which the isomorphic and imaginary book in the bibliography refers, like one mirror sending us to another along an open-ended search in a maze of self-reference, would be the forty-fourth text to be listed there.

Perhaps this announced work would have some of the qualities of that "other" Barthes imagines: "If I reunited X . . . , Y . . . , and

Z . . . : out of all these points . . . I would form a perfect figure: my other would be born" (*FDA*, 270). Perhaps it would be something like the double Barthes's book seems to invite, a reader's response that lingers on one figure (there, *Union*), or passage (here, the "Aria with Diverse Variations") longer than the others, using it as a way to get into the work, to open it up and see what's inside, and then see what can be done (motivated, like the Apocryphal son, by a twofold desire to make the invisible visible and at the same time seduce) to express one's desire, to write that imagined isomorphic book.

Or perhaps it could even be something that, itself a double, makes possible another: the messenger, medium, or mirror that enables a double—in this case, Barthes's—to perfect its resemblance.

This is in fact what seems to have happened, and to explain how perhaps I had best reproduce a letter written to the author of an epistolary novel called *Letters* in which the "Author" is beseiged with letters threatening to sue him for plagiarism (Jerome Bonaparte Bray complains that " 'your' 'novel' *G.G.B.*." was cribbed from his father Harold's *Revised New Syllabus* [*L*, 29–30][12]; Todd Andrews tells the author that his *Floating Opera* "was decidedly a partial betrayal on your part of a partial confidence on mine" [*L*, 85]; Jacob Horner reports that he is indeed "the Jacob Horner of your *End of the Road* novel" [*L*, 278]; A. B. Cook VI asks why his co-authorship of *The Sot-Weed Factor* isn't acknowledged [*L*, 406]):

5 May 1980

Mr. John Barth
Department of English
Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, Maryland 21218

Dear Mr. Barth:

I have read your *Letters* with fascination, indeed with something like an induced madness. The folly is this: Did you know, when you made mention eight times (have I counted right? pp. 147, 283, 358, 360–1, 427, 489, 493 and 576) of Goethe's *Werther*, that that epistolary novel was, like your own, composed of 88 letters? And did you know it from my article on your French namesake (off-print enclosed)[13]—which is, as far as I can tell, the first time anyone ever made such a declaration?

Sincerely yours,
Randolph Runyon

That the choice of 88 was deliberate is clear from page 49 of Barth's book: "Their letters will total 88 (this is the eighth), divided unequally into seven sections according to a certain scheme." Later the author

makes apparent his interest in the number of letters that his epistolary novel's forebears contain: he has counted 175 in *Les Liaisons dangereuses* and 537 in *Clarissa* (*L*, 654)—a choice of ancestry that allows the 88s to continue to work their spell: *Liaisons'* number has 88 at its exact center; its total together with *Clarissa*'s equal 8×88+8. Did the author of *Letters* know how many there were in *Werther*, or was it just marvelous luck (and whose?) that the two Barth(e)s should inscribe themselves into the same configuration of *Werther*-marked texts (recall that *Fragments* is based on a "regular reading" of Goethe's novel [*FDA*, 12], as if it were a mandala, a breviary, a regimen-text consulted 49 times; and bear in mind that events in the lives of Barth's letter-writers become anniversaries of dates in Werther's [*L*, 147, 358, 427])?[14] If he did know, then could it be because he counted them himself (an unlikely possibility, as I will soon explain)? I know of no other mention in *Werther* criticism of the 88 letters than my own, and this for a very good reason: I may have been wrong.

Werther's letters are nowhere numbered; not all are dated, and some were never delivered. To determine the full extent of their number, I had resolved (in the earlier version of the third chapter of the present work, published over a year before the appearance of Barth's novel of paranoid influence) to count everything that could be considered a letter—including the note to Charlotte's father asking for burial on the margin of the churchyard, recounted only at secondhand in his last note to her but of considerable importance for the interpretation of the novel (parallelling the lot of the Apocrypha, in particular Tobit, in its survival just beyond the pale of canonicity: accompanying the Bible through the centuries from a position just outside. Goethe's last recorded conversation with Eckermann, as it happens, began with a discussion of why "the noble Tobias" and his Apocryphal companions were excluded from the Christian canon),[15] as well as the note "From the Editor to the Reader" (*Der Herausgeber an den Leser*),[16] which comprises the last fifth of the novel (*W*, 79–99), and which itself contains 12 of the 88 letters. Werther's last letter to Charlotte was written over a period of two days, and is inserted by the "Editor" "at intervals, just as—and this is evident from what happened—he wrote it" (*W*, 83). It is interrupted not only by its having been written at different times, at different stages in Werther's progress toward suicide, but also by other letters; I therefore took each installment as a numberable part of the whole. The list is as follows:

4, 10, 12, 13, 15, 17, 22, 26, 27 May 1771; 16, 19, 21 29 June; 1, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 16, 18, 19, 20, 24, 26, 30 July; 8, 10, 12, 15, 18, 21, 22, 28, 30 August; 3, 10 September; 20 October; 10 November; 24

December; 8, 20 January 1772; 17, 20 February; 15, 16, 24 March; 19 April; 5, 9, 25 May; 11, 18 June; 29 July; 4, 21 August; 3, 6, 15 September; 10, 12, 19, 26, 27, 30 October; 3, 8, 15, 21, 24, 30 November; 1, 4, 6, 8, 17 December; "From the Editor to the Reader" (the framing "letter" that itself contains: an undated note thought to be the beginning of a letter to Wilhelm; a letter to Wilhelm dated 20 December; the first part of the letter to Charlotte, undated but begun on the morning of 21 December; part two of that letter, thought to have been written about 5 o'clock that afternoon; part three, written on the morning of the 22nd; the note he sent Albert asking for the pistols; part four of the letter to Charlotte, written on the evening of the 22nd; a farewell note to Wilhelm; a farewell note to Albert; the fifth and final installment of the letter to Charlotte, written just before midnight; the note to Charlotte's father, recounted in the aforementioned, entreating him to arrange for burial in the far corner of the churchyard).

Some indication that 88 may indeed be the actual number of letters may be found from a close examination of what happens at the letters that thereby become the center of the sequence. Letter 43, 17 February, has attached to it a footnote from the "Editor" that speaks of the existence of a missing letter, which "together with another which is referred to later on, has been withdrawn from this collection out of respect for this excellent man [Count C., the government minister who was the immediate superior of Werther's employer], as it was not thought that such boldness could be excused by the gratitude, however warm, of the public" (*W*, 57). Like Hofstadter's allusion to a not entirely real book in what is also, as it happens, a forty-third entry (in *GEB*'s bibliography), this letter threatens to break open the canon, calling into question the notion of there being a reality behind the fiction. Why is respect for the minister alleged as the reason for not publishing the letter when it would have been highly unlikely for it to have been included in the first place, as no other letter written *to* Werther (including what must have been scores from this faithful correspondent Wilhelm) ever appears? The practical effect of the insertion of the possibility of these two letters here is that an alternate number 44 and 45 is offered the counting reader, an alternate middle—44 and 45 occupy precisely that position among the 88—a slightly unsettling question mark, a miniature apocrypha concealed in the center of the novel's numerical system.[17] As for whether the reader should have been counting, it is important to remember that at an extremely important moment Werther was led into a counting game by Charlotte, on the page immediately following the one in which he was able to dance with her

only because he knew how to perform the dance that culminated (culminated for Werther, for at that very point he realized who Albert was, he "because confused, forgot the steps," and soon had to stop because of the lightning) in "the big Eight" (*W*, 19), *die grosse Achte*, as well as to note that when Charlotte announced "We are going to play at Counting, so pay attention" (*W*, 20) close attention to her words would reveal that she could have been asking for an 8: *Wir spielen Zahlens, sagte sie, nun gebt Acht!*[18]

If the Author of Barth's *Letters* thought *Werther* was composed of 88 letters, he either must have applied the same set of criteria (with which not every Goethe scholar would agree, perhaps, though they are in my eyes the most reasonable) or must have been keeping up with news of his French literary cousin (*Letters'* Author also bears the name Barth). But even these numerical results, well-argued as they may be, are called into question by the fact that a second version of *Werther* appeared in 1787, thirteen years after the first, in which many letters were added, and a few deleted, with the result that the novel now has either 100 or 101 letters (depending on whether one counts the framing letter from the editor to the reader). Yet even so the 88 will emerge, a hidden subset of the whole, if one adheres to a criterion that neatly avoids the problems raised by the way we counted the first edition, limiting the canon to those letters that, like all those appearing before the editor's intervention, bear a date. Thereby omitted are the letter never sent to Charlotte, in all its parts, the note requesting burial, and the one addressed from the editor to the reader, among others:

> 4, 10, 12, 13, 15, 17, 22, 26, 27, 30 May 1771; 16, 19, 21, 29 June; 1, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 16, 18, 19, 20, 24, 26, 26 [*sic*]; 30 July; 8, evening (of the 8th), 10, 12, 15, 18, 21, 22, 28, 30 August; 3, 10 September; 20 October; 26 November; 24 December; 8, 20 January 1772; 8, 17, 20 February; 15, 16, 24 March; 19 April; 5, 9, 25 May; 11, 16, 18 June; 29 July; 4, 21 August; 3, 4, 5, 6, 12, 15 September; 10, 12, 19, 26, evening (of the 26th), 27, 30 October; 3, 8, 15, 21, 22, 24, 26, 30 November; 1, 4, 6, 12, 14, 20 December.

It may be true, as the Author writes to Jerome Bonaparte Bray, acknowledging that it was Bray's madness that suggested it to him, "that every text implies a countertext" (*L*, 534). It may also be true that counting will help us find it. But one could not for a moment pretend that the strangest example imaginable of countertext, one in which Barth's text should produce yet another Goldberg Variation at the same time as what seems for a brief instant to be one more version of the story of Tobias—in effect, through this conjunction of canonical and noncanonical variations, a countertext to the book you're reading—

could be due to anything other than the kind of chance akin, but counter to, the luck that led William Legrand through error to the truth: Edgar Poe's hero, it will be remembered, found his way to the treasure only through an inordinate interest in a golden scarab that had ultimately no real relation to Captain Kidd's buried wealth. The connection that did exist between the gold and the bug was a fictive, textual one, something as thin as a sheet of paper,

> the singular coincidence involved in the fact that, unknown to me, there should have been a skull upon the other side of the parchment, immediately beneath my figure of the *scarabaeus*, and that this skull, not only in outline, but in size, should so closely resemble my drawing [The skull, and the ciphered directions to the treasure, were inscribed in invisible, heat-sensitive ink. They became visible only through the intervention of Legrand's Newfoundland, who rushed in suddenly and caused the parchment to fall to the floor, upside down, and in close proximity to the fire. The dog's name was Wolf (*GB*, 61)]. (*GB*, 59)

What Barth's Gold-Bug variation so closely resembles is the moment Tobias's father's eyes caught the dribble that dropped from the bird above him, together with the peculiar combination itself of burying, bones, and bird droppings that comes together in Tobit and some of its variants (think, for example, of Irving's windshields). This happens because of J. B. Bray's persistent inability to say or to write the word *bug* (or *insect, fly, bee*), for which he will substitute a blank, *blank, flaw*, or any number of close relations, in this case *bird*:

> Yes. Well: remember back there in all that fiction a tale by E. A. Poe called *The Gold Bird* (1843) in which William Legrand finds a message spelled out in numbers and deciphers it from the hypothesis that if the numbers stand for letters and the coded message is in English then the most frequently recurring number probably stands for the 5th letter of our alphabet *E*[19] et cetera and he drops the bird through the eye of a skull. (*L*, 327)[20]

As the solution of Bach's supplemental Goldberg Variations, the fourteen riddle canons recently unearthed in Strasbourg, served as a model for how the texts collected here could be read—making use of something like Dowland's "imaginary rule" to draw that part "which is not set down out of that part which is"—so might also, in a darker sense, this Poe/Barth Gold-Bug/Bird countertext. It seems to draw together the essentials—Bach, variation, error, puzzle-solving, ornitho-ophthalmic imagery, unburied dead—and to do so very well, yet we know it can't. But the story itself Barth embroiders is one that tells how an obsession is not always fruitless; how, like a fascination with a covering *frottis* or a Toby jug bearing narcissus (*FLW*, 271), it can bring to the surface qualities that weren't realized before.

And so perhaps it doesn't really matter, so much, that a letter from the owner of Sarah's Toby jug should lately arrive and provide an alternate explanation for the reunion of birds and eyes, women and fish that we thought came from the Apocryphal source:

> A much more important private ikon in my life than the little Toby jug is a Balinese xoanon that a traveling friend once brought back for me; carved in wood, its base is a fish's mouth, from which emerges a pregnant woman, whose head is that of an upward-looking bird. I might have used it as a colophon on all and any of my fictions; indeed seriously thought of using it on the jacket of *The Ebony Tower*. Metamorphoses. You are not altogether wrong about the fish part of it.[21]

1. "The Gold-Bug,"

2. Garp's parentage was already somewhat lupine: his mother, who was struck by the qualities of John Wolf's name when she sought an editor for her book ("a plain name, almost like an actor's name," as if it wasn't somehow real, but adopted for some purpose, a floating sign [which it is], "or the name of an animal in a child's book" [*WAG*, 120]), was herself, Garp once wrote, "a lone wolf" (*WAG*, 4); it was while T. S.'s father "wolfed at her breast" one night in the Boston Mercy Hospital that she began to realize his paternal potential (*WAG*, 21); Garp senior had a predecessor in the B-17E ball turret whose position he envied ("He was a better shot than Garp, but the ball-turret was where Garp wished he could be"), a certain Fowler (*WAG*, 16), a name whose anagrammatical potential may be lost on Garp (and even Irving).

3. Hereafter cited as *ZAMM*. All quotations are reprinted with the permission of William Morrow & Company, Inc., Publishers, and The Bodley Head.

4. See chapter 1, note 22, above.

5. Gerould, p. 167.

6. Translated by R. Hackforth, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, p. 493.

7. In *La Dissémination*, pp. 69–197.

8. Pp. x–xii.

9. See Introduction, n. 3, above.

10. See Barry Olshen's discussion of this episode in his *John Fowles*, pp. 82–88.

11. Christoph Wolff, "Bach's *Handexemplar* of the Goldberg Variations: A New Source," p. 229. Wolff is credited with the discovery in Hofstadter's version of the story, but in fact his role was really that of proving the canons were written in Bach's hand. This took place in the spring of 1975, thanks to the intervention of Olivier Alain, Inspecteur de la Musique for the French government, who came across them while visiting the Strasbourg Conservatory in 1974. Paul Blumenroeder had acquired the annotated edition of the Goldberg, with the 14 canons on the inside back cover, in 1932 and apparently had some knowledge of what they were (*Avant-Propos* to the French edition, *14 Canons sur la basse Goldberg BWV 1087*, ed. Olivier Alain [Paris: Editions Salabert, 1976]).

12. John Barth, *Letters*.

13. *"Fragments of an Amorous Discourse*: Canon in U^{bis}," *Visible Language*, Autumn 1977, pp. 387–427 (the original of the present chapter three).

14. Goethe's novel is not the only source for the "almaniacal reflex" (*L*, 358) that so many of Barth's correspondents share; but of the three epistolary models whose letters

he has counted (*Les Liaisons dangereuses, Clarissa,* and, it seems, *Werther*—though not, for example, Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Hêloïse*), it is alluded to by far the most often.

15. Goethe argues that the Apocryphal writings (he mentions Tobit, The Wisdom of Solomon, and Ecclesiasticus) did not fit the Church's salvationist scheme, neither depicting the Fall of Man nor foretelling the Savior to come (conversation of 11 March 1832, eleven days before his death, *Conversations of Goethe with Eckermann and Soret,* pp. 566–68; in German: *Gesprache mit Goethe,* pp. 769–71).

16. *Der junge Goethe,* p. 356.

17. The second missing letter, "referred to later on," is apparently the one mentioned in Werther's letter of 19 April 1772, 48th in the collection—so that what we have could also be thought of as a pseudo-44 and -49.

18. *Der Junge Goethe,* p. 288.

19. E=8 in the pirate's cipher; that there are no less than five 88s in the message helps persuade Legrand that he is right, "for *e* is doubled with great frequency in English" (*GB,* 64). It is the only letter in Poe's list of the most frequent that agrees with a more recent, computer-determined list that Hofstadter provides: eaoidhnrstuy... (*GB,* 64) vs. ETAOINSHRDLU (*GEB,* 630).

20. To counter this apocryphal—i.e., false—variation of Tobias's story, I would like to make mention of a real one, an explicit reworking of the Apocryphal tale, but one that does not figure among the 14 texts (nor its protagonist among the 8 heroes) assembled here: Frank Yerby's *Tobias and the Angel* (New York: Dell, 1975). For more on how a gold-bug can suddenly appear at the most appropriate moment, see Carl Jung's essay "On Synchronicity" (*Collected Works,* vol. 8 [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979], pp. 525–26)—where he also tells of encountering some frighteningly insistent recurring fish on Good Friday, 1 April 1949 (the day of *poissons d'avril,* April Fool tricks; and for Barth's Bonaparte Bray, St. Elret's Day, "patron of cipherers" [*L,* 325], a wholly apocryphal feast-day based on an anagram of the name of the novel).

21. Letter from John Fowles to the author, 11 January 1980.

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